Algernon Blackwood

Episodes Before Thirty

POWELL'S VINTAGE REPRINTS

EPISODES BEFORE THIRTY

By

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To

ALFRED H. LOUIS

EPISODES BEFORE THIRTY

CHAPTER I

A STRONG emotion, especially if experienced for the first time, leaves a vivid memory of the scene where it occurred. I see a room in a New York boarding-house. I can touch the wooden bed, the two gas-brackets beside the looking-glass, the white door of the cupboard, the iron "register" in the wall that let in heated air, the broken sofa. The view from the dirty windows towards the high roof of Tony Pastor's music hall in 14th Street, with a side glimpse of the trees in Irving Place, show clearly. The rattle of the Broadway cable cars, the clang of their bells, still come to me through that stifling August air, when the shade thermometer stood at a hundred, with humidity somewhere about 95 per cent. Thoughts of the sea and mountains, vainly indulged within those walls, are easily remembered too.

The room I am writing in now seems less actual than the one in the East 19th Street boarding-house, kept by Mrs. Bernstein, a German Jewess, whose husband conducted his own orchestra in a Second Avenue restaurant. Though thirty years ago, it is more clearly defined for me than Lady X's dining-room where I dined last night, and where the lady I took in said graciously, "I simply loved your *Blue Lagoon*," which, naturally, I was able to praise unreservedly, while leaving her with the illusion as long as possible that she had made friends with its gifted author. And this detailed clarity is due, I am sure, to the fact that in that New York room I had my first experience of three new emotions, each of which, separately, held horror.

Horror draws its lines deep; its pictures stand out in high relief. In my case the horrors were, perhaps minor ones, but at the age of twenty-one—an exceptionally inexperienced twenty-one—they seemed important; and the fact that they were combined entitles them to be considered major. They were three in number: the horror of loathsome vermin running over my body night after night, the horror of hunger, and the horror of living at close quarters with a criminal and degraded mind.

All, as I said, came together; all were entirely new sensations. "Close quarters," too, is used advisedly, for not only was the room a small one, the cheapest in a cheap house, but it was occupied by three of us—three Englishmen "on their uppers," three big Englishmen into the bargain, two of us standing 6 feet 2 inches, the other 6 feet 3 inches in his socks. We shared that room for many weeks, taking our turn at sleeping two in the bed, and one on the mattress we pulled off and kept hidden in the cupboard during the day. Mrs. Bernstein, denying her blood, won our affection by charging eight dollars only, the price for two, morning coffee included; and Mrs. Bernstein's face, fat, kindly, perspiring, dirty, is more vivid in my memory after all these years than that of the lady last night who so generously mistook me for De Vere Stacpoole. Her voice even rings clear, with its Jewish lisp, its guttural German, its nasal twang thrown in:

"I ask my hospand. Berhaps he let you stay anozzer week."

What the husband said we never knew. He was usually too drunk to say anything coherent. What mattered to us was that we were not turned out at the moment, and that, in the long run, the good-hearted woman received her money.

Certain objects in that room retain exceptional clarity in my mind. If thought-pictures could be photographed, a perfect print of the bed and gas-bracket could be printed from my memory. With the former especially I associate the vermin, the hunger, and the rather tawdry criminal.

I could describe that bed down to the smallest detail; I could draw it accurately, even to the carving; were I a carpenter I could make it. All that I suffered in it, of physical and mental anguish, the vain longings and despair, the hopes and fears, the loneliness, the feverish dreams—the entire dread panorama still hangs in the air between its stained brown foot and the broken sofa, as though of yesterday. I can see a tall man pass the end of it, one eye on me and another on the door, opening a razor slowly as he went. I see the blue eyes narrowing in his white face, the treachery of the coward twisting his lip into a smirk. I can see him sleeping like a child beside me, touching me. Moving stealthily about the room in the darkness too, as, thinking me asleep, he stole on bare feet to recover the confession of forgery I had forced him to sign, I can still see his dim outline, and even hear his tread—a petty scoundrel unwittingly on his way to gaol.

The bed, thus, is vividly present in my memory. By contrast with it, not quite so sharp, perhaps, and a pleasanter feeling associated with it, another New York sleeping-place rises in the mind—a bench in Central Park. Here, however, the humour of adventure softens the picture, though at the time it did not soften the transverse iron arms which made it impossible to stretch out in comfort. Nor is there any touch of horror in it. Precise and detailed recollection fades. The hoboes who shared it with me were companions, even comrades of a sort, and one did not feel them necessarily criminal or degraded. They were "on their uppers" much as I was, and far quicker than I was at the trick of suddenly sitting upright when the night policeman's tread was coming our way. What thoughts they indulged in I had no means of knowing, but I credited them with flitting backwards to a clean room somewhere and a soft white bed, possibly to that ridiculous figure of immense authority, a nurse, just as my own flashed back to a night nursery in the Manor House, Crayford, Kent. That the seats I favoured were near the Swings lent possibly another touch to the childhood's picture.

The memory, anyhow, is a sweeter one than that o the bed in East 19th Street, if less sharply defined. The cool fresh air, the dew, the stars, the smell of earth and leaves, were all of them clean, and no price asked at dawn. Yet the two—the bed and the bench—are somehow linked together in my mind, the one invariably calling up the other; and, thanks to them probably, no bed bothers me now, lumpy or sloping though it be, in train, hotel, or lodging. I have slept in strange places since—high in the Caucasus, on the shores of the Black Sea, on the Egyptian desert, on the banks of the Danube, in the Black Forest and Hungary—but each time the effort to get comfortable brought back the bed and the bench, and sleep soon followed to smother both.

The gas-brackets, similarly, rise vividly before my eyes, associated with the pain, the weariness of hunger; not of true starvation, but of weeks and months of undernourishment, caused by one meal a day. The relation between hunger and gas-brackets may seem remote. It was on the latter, however, that we learned to fix the metal top which made the flame spread in a circle round a light tin cooking-pot. We boiled water for milkless tea in this way, cooked porridge, and when porridge was not to be had we heated water with dried apples in it. I remember the day we discovered that it was more economical to eat the strips of dried apple first, then drink the hot water that made them swell so comfortingly inside us. They proved more filling that way, the false repletion lasted longer, the sense of bulk was more satisfying, the gnawing ceased, and the results, if temporary, at least made it possible to fall asleep.

There are other details of that sordid New York room which still retain their first disagreeable vividness, each with the ghost—a very sturdy ghost—of the emotion that printed it indelibly in the mind. These details are best mentioned, however, in their proper place and sequence. It should first be told how we came to be there.

CHAPTER II

WE arrived in New York towards the end of October, coming straight from five months in the Canadian backwoods. Before that, to mention myself first, there had been a year in Canada, where, even before the age of twenty-one, I had made a living of sorts by teaching the violin, French, German, and shorthand. Showing no special talent for any profession in particular, and having no tastes that could be held to indicate a definite career, I had come to Canada three years before for a few weeks' trip. My father, in an official capacity, had passes from Liverpool to Vancouver, and we crossed in the *Etruria*, a Cunarder which my mother had launched. He was much fêted and banqueted, and the C.P.R. bigwigs, from Lord Strathcona and Sir William van Horne downwards, showed him all attention, placing an observation car at his disposal. General James, the New York postmaster, gave a dinner in his honour at the Union League Club, where I made my first and last speech—consisting of nine words of horrified thanks for coupling "a chip of the old block," as the proposer called me, with the "Chief of the British Postal Service."

A ludicrous wound to vanity helps it to stick in the mind—my father wore no braces, and I copied him, but—well, in his case no belt was necessary, whereas I was slim. It suddenly dawned on me, as I spluttered my brief words, that a line of white was showing between my waistcoat and the top of my trousers. The close of my speech was hurried, my bow was cautious; I was extremely relieved to sit down again.

In the lovely autumn weather, we saw Canada at its best, and the trip decided my future. My father welcomed it as a happy solution. I came, therefore, to Toronto at the age of twenty, with £100 a year allowance,

and a small capital to follow when I should have found some safe and profitable chance of starting life. With me came—in the order of their importance—a fiddle, the "Bhagavad Gita," Shelley, "Sartor Resartus," Berkeley's "Dialogues," Patanjali's "Yoga Aphorisms," de Quincey's "Confessions," and—a unique ignorance of life . . . . I served my first literary apprenticeship on the *Methodist Magazine*, a monthly periodical published in Toronto, and before that licked stamps in the back office of the Temperance and General Life Assurance Company, at nothing a week, but with the idea of learning the business, so that later I might bring out some English insurance company to Canada.

The first taught me that, just as I had no ambition to write, so, likewise, I possessed no talent; the second merely made articulate the dislike I felt for anything to do with Business. It was the three months in the insurance office that caused me to accept eagerly the job on the *Methodist Magazine* at four dollars a week, and the reaction helped to make the work congenial if not stimulating.

The allowance of ten dollars a week was difficult to live on, and I had been looking everywhere for employment. It was through a daughter of Sir Thomas Galt, a friend of my father's on our previous trip to Canada, that I obtained this job—sixteen shillings a week, hours ten to four.

Dr. Withrow, editor of the leading Methodist magazine, and of various Christian Endeavour periodicals for children and young people, was a pleasant old gentleman, who went about in a frock coat and slippers, had a real sense of humour and a nice wife and daughter. His editorial den was in his own little house, and my duties were to write an article every month for the magazine, which was illustrated, and also to write a few descriptive lines of letterpress to accompany the full-page illustrations for the numerous Christian Endeavour and Methodist periodicals for young people and children. He taught me the typewriter, and with my shorthand I took

most of his letters at dictation, and certainly earned my money. My monthly articles in the magazine were on such subjects as Christmas in England, Life at a Moravian School, The Black Forest, Travel in the Alps—anything that my limited experience enabled me to describe at first-hand, and on the whole the old gentleman seemed satisfied. The description of the children's pictures, however, always made him chuckle, though he never said why, and I wrote dozens of these a day, describing the picture of "King Canute and the Sea," "Elijah in a Chariot of Fire," "A Child Blowing Bubbles," "The Wood-boring Beetle," etc. etc.

He would dictate some of his articles of travel to me, and I would take them down in shorthand, and he often made such grotesque mistakes in facts that I quietly corrected these as I wrote, and when I read out the sentence to him he would notice the alteration and look at me over his spectacles and say:

"Thank you. Yes, I was wrong there. The fact is, I have so many articles to write that I compose two at a time in my mind, and they get muddled up. An editor should always be accurate, and Methodist readers are cranky and hard to please." He was a Methodist parson himself, which did not prevent him saying exactly what he thought. He lunched off dates and bananas, which he kept in a bag beside his desk, and that same desk was in such disorder that he never could find what he wanted, and I was not surprised to learn that, before I came, the printers got the wrong papers, and that many of the children's pictures got descriptions underneath that did not belong to them—for instance, a boy blowing a bubble was published over a few lines describing the habits of snakes, "as seen in our illustration," and so forth.

I got on so well with the little Methodist that he wanted to come to the evening French classes I was giving at fifty cents a lesson to some of the clerks in the insurance office, and to bring his daughter with him. He said a little more knowledge of French would be very

good for him when he took his conducted tours of Canadian Methodists to Switzerland; but I did not rise to this, and persuaded him to wait till I could get a more select class to meet, perhaps, at his own house, where a girl could more suitably attend. For, to tell the truth, some of my pupils had a habit of coming slightly drunk—or, as they called it, "with a jag on." He, however, would not wait, so I lost two good pupils! . . . Dr. Withrow, patient little man of kindly disposition! His faded black frock-coat, his spectacles high on his puckered forehead, his carpet slippers, his tobacco-stained white beard, his sincere beliefs and his striped trousers of a pattern I have always since labelled mentally as "Methodist trousers"—it is a gentle little memory tucked away among unkinder ones, and I still hear him giving me my first and only lesson how to write. His paraphrase of "fatal facility" stays with me: "Fluency means dullness, unless the mind is packed with thought." It stays with me because the conversation led to my asking if I might write an article for the monthly on the subject of Buddhism. Behind it lay an ever keener desire to write something on Hegel, whose philosophy I felt certain was based on some personal experience of genuine mystical kind.

"From what point of view?" he asked, his forehead puckering with amazement.

"That of belief," I said, my mind bursting with an eager desire to impart information, if not also to convert.

He passed his hand across his forehead, knocking the spectacles off. Then, catching them with a fumbling motion which betrayed his perturbation, he inquired: "But, of course, Mr. Blackwood, not your *own?*"

The voice, the eyes, the whole attitude of the body made me realize he was prepared to be shocked, if not already shocked.

"Yes," I replied truthfully, "my own. I've been a Buddhist for a long time."

He stared for some time at me without a word, then smiled a kindly, indulgent, rather sceptical smile. "It would be hardly suitable," he mentioned, as I felt his

whole being draw away from me as from something dangerous and unclean. Possibly, of course, he did not believe me; I am sure he prayed for me. Our relations seemed less cordial after that; he read most carefully every word I wrote in his magazine and children's pages, but he never referred to the matter again.

My Methodist job, none the less, was a happy one; this first regular wage I had yet received in life gave me the pleasant sensation that I was launched. My connexion with Methodism ceased, not because I was dismissed or had failed to give satisfaction (indeed, the editor had just told me my salary was to be raised!), but because all the capital I should ever have was sent to me about that time from England—about £2,000—and I went into partnership with a farmer outside Toronto and bought some forty head of pedigree Jersey cattle.

CHAPTER III

THE Islington Jersey Dairy, Messrs. Cooper and Blackwood, started business with a retail office in College Street, a number of milk carts bearing our names in black lettering upon a yellow background, and the supply farm at Islington, a lovely little hamlet on the shores of Lake Ontario, some six miles west of the city. We sold rich Jersey milk, we sold eggs and butter too. I gave picnics at our pretty little farm for customers I knew socially. The upper floors of the building in College Street we furnished, letting bedrooms at a dollar a week to young Englishmen, clerks in offices, and others. I engaged an old, motherly Englishwoman, Mrs. 'Iggins, with a face like a rosy apple, to "do" for us—she made the beds and cooked the breakfast—while her pretty daughter, in cap and apron, was our dairymaid. The plan did not work smoothly—the dairymaid was too pretty, perhaps; Mrs. Higgins too voluble. Complaints came from all sides; the lodgers, wildish young fellows in a free and easy country, made more promises than payments. One wanted a stove, another a carpet in his bedroom, another complained about his bed. I had my first experience of drink and immorality going on under my very eyes. . . . Trouble—though mercifully of another kind—spread then to the customers. The milk began to go sour; it was too rich; it wouldn't keep; the telephone rang all day long. Cooper, an experienced dairy-farmer, was at his wits' end; every device for scouring the bottles, for cooling the milk before bringing it twice a day to the city, failed. At dinner parties my hostess would draw me tactfully aside. "The milk, I'm afraid, Mr. Blackwood," she would murmur softly, "was sour again this morning. Will you speak about it?"

I spoke about it—daily—but Alfred Cooper's only com-

ment was, "Say, have you got a bit more capital? That's what we really want."

That sour milk became a veritable nightmare that never left me. I had enough of milk. Yet, later in life, I found myself "in milk" again, but that time it was dried milk, a profitable business to the owners, though it brought me nothing. I worked six years at it for a bare living wage. But, at any rate, it couldn't turn sour. It was a powder.

Alfred Cooper was a delightful fellow. I think some detail of how our partnership came to be may bear the telling. It points a moral if it does not adorn a tale. It may, again, prove useful to other young Englishmen in Canada similarly waiting with money to invest; but on the other hand it may not, since there can be few, I imagine, as green as I was then, owing to a strange upbringing, or as ignorant of even the simplest worldly practices. Of the evangelical training responsible for this criminal ignorance I will speak later.

Cooper, then, was a delightful fellow, fitting my ideal of a type I had read about—the fearless, iron-muscled colonial white man who fought Indians. The way we met was quite simply calculated—by a clerk in the bank where my English allowance of £100 a year was paid by my father. The clerk and I made friends—naturally; and one day—also naturally—he suggested a Sunday walk to Islington, some six miles down the lake shore. We could get tea at a farm he knew. We did. The praises of the Cooper family, who owned it, had already been sung. I was enchanted. So, doubtless, was the clerk.

The farm was a small one—perhaps eight acres; and Cooper lived on it in poverty with his aged mother and unmarried sister. It was charmingly situated, the fields running down to the water, pine copses dotting the meadows to the north, and the little village church standing at one corner near the road. Mrs. Cooper, in cap and apron, dropping every "h" that came her way, described to me how she and her husband had emigrated from England sixty years before, in the days of sailing ships.

Her husband's grave in the churchyard we could see from the window while we sat at tea—an unusually sumptuous tea for a farmhouse—and it was evident that she was more alive to the memories of half a century ago in the "old country," than to the plans of her ambitious son in the new colony.

The son came to tea too, but a little late, having obviously brushed himself up a bit for his visitor from England. He was about forty years of age, tall, well-built, keen-faced, with steel-blue eyes and a hatchet nose, and his body was just that combination of leanness, strength and nervous alertness which made one think of a wolf. He was extremely polite, not to say flattering, to me. I thought him delightful, his idyllic farm still more delightful; he was so eager, vigorous and hardy, a typical pioneer, slaving from dawn to sunset to win a living from the soil in order to support the family. I trusted him, admired him immensely. Having been duly prepared for the picture on our walk out, I was not disappointed. He spoke very frankly of the desperate work he and his sister were forced to do; also of what he might do, and what could be made of the farm, if only he had a little capital. I liked him; he liked me; the clerk liked us both.

He showed me round the farm after tea, and his few Jersey cows came up and nosed his hand. The elderly sister, a weaker repetition of himself, joined us. She, too, slaved from morning till night. The old mother, diminutive, quiet, brave, devoted to her children yet with her heart in the old country she would never see again, completed a charming picture in my mind. I was invited to come again.

Another picture, still more alluring, was set before me during the walk back, the picture of what a "little capital" could do with that tiny farm. The dairy business that could be worked up made me feel a rich man before the Toronto spires became visible. The desire to put capital into the Islington Jersey Dairy became the one hope of my life. Would Cooper agree?

Would he accept me as a partner? The suggestion came from myself. The clerk, of course, had never dreamed of such a thing. They *might* welcome me, the clerk thought. Very kindly, he said he would sound Cooper about it and let me know. . . .

The scheme seemed such a perfect solution of my problem of earning a living, that I was afraid up to the last moment something must happen to prevent it. Cooper would die, or change his mind, or one of my influential business friends would warn me not to do it. I was so jealous of interference that I sought no advice. Without so much as a scratch of the pen between us the enterprise started. So heartily did I like and trust my partner that when, later, wiser friends inquired about my contract with him, it infuriated me. "Contract! A contract with Alfred Cooper!"

We did a roaring trade at first. Our Jersey milk was beyond all question the best in the town. It was honest, unwatered milk, and our cream, without any preservative added, was so prized that we soon had more orders than we could fill. Why our milk and cream soured so readily, losing us trade rapidly later, is a mystery to me to this day.

Within a few weeks of our starting business, Cooper convinced me that a model dairy building on the farm would be a desirable improvement; it would save labour in various ways; it was built. The farm belonged to his mother, not to him; he kept the building when our collapse followed. Next, his sister really must have someone to help her, and that someone was provided at high wages. Business was good, so good in fact that we could not supply orders. Extra milk must therefore be bought from neighbouring farmers. This was done, the contracts being made by Cooper. I never asked to see them. The bills were paid every month without question on my part. More grazing fields, with enough artificial food to feed at least a hundred cows in addition, these too had to be paid for. As for the appetites of our forty animals, I marvelled at them long before I became sus-

picious. Yet when, after much insisting, I saw one of the farmer's bills for extra milk, it left me, naturally, no wiser than before, and certainly not a whit more comforted, for the less our trade became, the more milk, apparently, those farmers sold us!

Six months later the firm of Cooper and Blackwood dissolved partnership, Blackwood having got the experience and Cooper having got—something quite as useful, but more marketable. Cooper's I.O.U. for five hundred dollars, now stuck in an old scrap-book somewhere, made me realize a little later how lucky it was that I had only a limited amount to lose.

Yet, though it seemed the end of the world to me, my capital lost, my enterprise a failure, I recall the curious sense of relief with which I saw the last cow knocked down to some bidder from up-country. From the very beginning I had hated the entire business. I did not know a Jersey from a Shorthorn, so to speak. I knew nothing about farming, still less about dairy-farming. The year spent at Edinburgh University to learn the agricultural trade had been wasted, for, instead, I attended what interested me far more—the post-mortems, operations, lectures on pathology, and the dissecting room. My notebooks of Professor Wallace's lectures, crammed as they were, with entries about soil, rotation of crops, and drainage, represented no genuine practical knowledge. I knew nothing. My father sent me out to Canada to farm. I went. I farmed. Cooper and Blackwood is carved upon the gravestone. But the gravestone cost £2,000, my share of the forced sale being about £600. My Canadian experience, anyhow, can be summed up in advice, which is, of course, a bromide now: let any emigrant young Englishman earn his own living for at least five years in any colony before a penny of capital is given him to invest.

It was with this £600 I soon after went into partnership with another man, but this time an honest one. We bought a small hotel in the heart of Toronto. It also lasted about six months. When the crash came we lived

together from May to October on a small island in a thirty-mile lake of the Ontario hinterland; we shared a long slice of difficult life together subsequently in New York; we shared the horrors of East 19th Street together. He failed me only once, missing a train a few years later by a couple of minutes. It was the Emigrant Sleeper to Duluth on Lake Superior, *en route* for the Rainy River Gold Fields, where four of us had made sudden plans to try our fortunes. I was on a New York paper at the time, and had secured passes over the first fifteen hundred miles. As the train drew out of the Central Station I saw my friend racing down the platform, a minute too late! From that day to this I have never set eyes on him again. It was an abrupt end to a friendship cemented by hard times, and my disappointment at losing his companionship was rather bitter at the time.

CHAPTER IV

AT the time we met, this friend of mine had been out from Oxford—New College, I think—a year or so, and with a Cambridge man about his own age, had been running a sporting goods shop in King Street. They sold the paraphernalia of cricket, tennis, boxing and the like, but with no marked success. The considerable money invested by the pair of them earned no interest. John Kay was impatient and dissatisfied; the other had leanings towards the brokering trade, as offering better opportunities. Both were ready to cut their losses, realize, and get out. They did so, remaining the best of friends. And it was one day, while these preliminary negotiations were being discussed in the back office, where they muddled away the day between rare sales, that Kay said to me mysteriously: "Look here, I say—I've got a wonderful scheme. Have you got any money left?"

I mentioned the £600.

"I call it a rotten shame," he went on. "Of course, you've been swindled. These people look upon us as their natural prey"—and he proceeded to describe his "scheme"—to buy a small hotel which, owing to its bad name, was going cheap; to work up a respectable business and a valuable goodwill; then to sell out at a top price and retire with a comfortable fortune. Kay was twenty-three, two years my senior; to me, then, he seemed an experienced man of business, almost elderly. The scheme took my breath away. It was very tempting. The failure of the dairy farm had left me despondent; I felt disgraced; the end of life, it seemed, had come. I was ready to grasp at anything that held out hopes of a recovery of fortune. But an hotel! I hesitated.

"I know nothing about running an hotel," I objected.

"Neither do I—yet," was the sanguine answer, "but we can learn. It's only common sense and hard work. We can hire a good manager and engage a first-class cook."

"How many rooms are there?"

"Only thirteen. It's the bar where we shall make the money."

"The bar——!"

"There are two bars, one on the main street and another on the back. Billy Bingham has made the place too hot to hold him. His licence is to be withdrawn. He's got to get out. We can get his licence transferred to us all right, if we promise to make the place respectable. We'll have good food, a first-rate lunch counter for the business men, we can let the big rooms for club dinners and society banquets, and there's a 100 per cent. profit, you know, on liquor. We'll make the *Hub* the best 'joint' in the town. All the fellows will come. A year will do it. Then we'll sell out . . . ."

I was not listening. The word "liquor"—I had never touched alcohol in my life—made such a noise in my mind that I could hear nothing else.

"My father," I mentioned in a faint voice, "is a public man at home. He's a great temperance reformer. He speaks and writes against drink. He's brought me up that way. It would be a terrible shock to him if his son made money out of a bar." The hotel scheme, indeed, seemed to me an impossibility. A picture of the Temperance meetings held in our country house flashed through my mind. I glanced down at my coat, on whose lapel, until recently, there had been a little strip of blue ribbon, signifying that I was a member of the Band of Hope which included several million avowed teetotallers. "Don't you see, old chap?" I explained further. "It would simply break his heart, and my mother's too."

"He need never know anything about it," came the answer at once. "Why should he? Our names needn't

appear at all. We'll call ourselves the 'Hub Wine Company, Limited.'" My head was swimming, my mind buzzing with conflicting voices as we walked down King Street to inspect the premises. I ached to re-establish my position. The prospect of a quick recovery of fortune was as sweet a prize as ever tempted a green youth like myself. My partner, too, this time would be a "gentleman," a fellow my father might have invited to dine and play tennis; it was my appalling ignorance of life that gave to his two years' seniority some imagined quality of being a man much older than myself, and one who knew what he was about.

The character of the proposed enterprise, of course, had no effect at all upon the judgment. To be known as a successful hotel proprietor was a legitimate ambition. My father's stern judgment of philanthropists who preached temperance while owning distilleries or holding brewery shares—I knew it word for word—was quite forgotten. Only the little personal point of view was present: "I've been an ass. I must make good. Here's a chance, a certainty, of getting money. I must take it. It's my Karma."

We strode down King Street together, past the corner of Yonge Street, below the windows of the hated Temperance and General Life Assurance Company where I had licked stamps, and on towards the Hub Hotel. The Toronto air was fresh and sweet, the lake lay blue beyond, the sunlight sparkled. Something exhilarating and optimistic in the atmosphere gave thought a happy and sanguine twist. It was a day of Indian summer, a faint perfume of far-distant forest fires adding a pleasant touch to the familiar smell of the cedar-wood sidewalks. A mood of freedom, liberty, great spaces, fine big enterprises in a free country where everything was possible, of opportunities seized and waves of fortune taken on their crest—I remember this mood as sharply still, and the scent of a wood-fire or a cedar pencil recalls it as vividly still, as though I had experienced it last week.

I glanced at my companion. I liked him, trusted him. There was a happy light in his frank blue eyes. He was a good heavy-weight boxer too. The very man, I felt, for a bold enterprise of this sort. He talked the whole way. He was describing how we might increase the fortune we should draw out of our successful venture in a year's time, when we passed Tim Sullivan, standing at the door of his, a rival, saloon, and exchanged a nod with him. The Irishman had a shadow on his face. "He's heard about it," whispered Kay, with a chuckle. "He'll look glummer still when he sees all his customers coming across the way to us!"

Turning down a narrow side street, the Hub blocked the way, a three-story building with a little tower, clean windows, and two big swinging doors. It ran through to a back street where there was another entrance.

"Here it is," said Kay, in the eager, happy voice of a man who has just inherited a family mansion and come to inspect it. "This is the Hub where we shall make our fortune."

It seemed to me I had entered an entirely new world. Everything was spotless. The rows of bottles and glasses, the cash-register and brass taps glittered in the sunlight that fell through coloured windows. The perfume of stale liquor was not as disagreeable as it sounds. In one sense the whole place looked as harmless as the aisle of some deserted church. I stood just inside those swing-doors, which had closed behind me, with a strange feeling of gazing at some den of vice reconstructed in the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's. Empty and innocent as the bar might appear, however, there was a thrill of adventure, even of danger, about it that reached my mind, with a definite shock of dread.

"Nice, airy premises, with plenty of room," Kay's cheery voice came to me from a distance. "This is the principal bar. Twenty men could line up easily. It'll want four bar-tenders . . . . There's another bar at the end. There'll be a few fights there before we've

done. The dining-room lies through that archway just between the two."

He walked away, passing along the length of the room and down three steps into a narrower, darker bar beyond, where the shadows hid him. But his voice still reached me: "It's on the back street, this bar," he called. "This is for the *hoi polloi*. We shall want a chucker out . . . . Here's the private door leading to the upstairs dining-room we'll let out for banquets. We'll have our own bedrooms and sitting-room on the first floor too . . . ."

His voice roared on; I heard, but did not answer; I had not moved an inch from my place against the swing-doors. He had not, of course, the faintest idea what was passing through my mind at the moment; and, had I told him, he would only have laughed good-naturedly and talked of the money we should make. The fact was, however, that the whole of my early up-bringing just then came at me with a concentrated driving-force which made the venture seem absolutely impossible.

"We'll call this one the House of Commons," he bawled delightedly; "and that one—the front bar—the House of Lords. We shall take 250 dollars a day easily!"

The shock, the contrast, the exaggerated effect of entering a saloon for the first time in my life, especially with the added possibility of shortly becoming its proprietor, were natural enough. My unworldliness, even at twenty-one, was abnormal. Not only had I never smoked tobacco nor touched alcohol of any description, but I had never yet set foot inside a theatre; a race-course I had never seen, nor held a billiard cue, nor touched a card. I did not know one card from another. Any game that might involve betting or gambling was anathema. In other ways, too, I had been sheltered to the point of ignorance. I had never even danced. To hold a young woman round the waist was not alone immodest but worse than immodest.

This peculiarly sheltered up-bringing, this protected

hot-house of boyhood and early youth to which a drinking bar was the vestibule of hell, and a music-hall an invention of a personal devil, are necessary to understand the reaction produced in me as I stood in Billy Bingham's "joint." I stood, literally, on the brink of "the downward path." I heard my father's voice, I saw my mother's eyes . . . . In very definite form I now faced "worldly temptation" they had so often warned me against. Accompanying an almost audible memory of "Get thee behind me, Satan," drove a crowded kaleidoscope of vivid pictures from those sheltered years.

My parents were both people of marked character, with intense convictions; my mother, especially, being a woman of great individuality, of iron restraint, grim humour, yet with a love and tenderness, and a spirit of uncommon sacrifice, that never touched weakness. She possessed powers of mind and judgment, at the same time, of which my father, a public servant—financial secretary to the Post Office—availed himself to the full. She had great personal beauty. A young widow, her first husband having been the 6th Duke of Manchester, also of the evangelical persuasion, she met my father at Kimbolton soon after his return from the Crimean War, where he had undergone that religious change of heart known to the movement as "conversion." From a man of fashion, a leader in the social life to which he was born, he changed with sudden completeness to a leader in the evangelical movement, then approaching its height. He renounced the world, the flesh, the devil and all their works. The case of "Beauty Blackwood," to use the nickname his unusual handsomeness gained for him, was, in its way, notorious. He became a teetotaller and non-smoker, wrote devotional books, spoke in public, and held drawing-room prayer meetings, the Bible always in his pocket, communion with God always in his heart. His religion was genuine, unfaltering, consistent and sincere. He carried the war into his own late world of fashion. He never once looked back. He knew a vivid joy, a wondrous peace, his pain being for others only, for those who were

not "saved." The natural, instinctive type he was, asserted its claim. He became a genuine saint. Also, to the very end, he remained that other delightful thing, possible only to simple hearts, a boy.

Both my parents, thus, believed in Jesus, with a faith of that simple, unshakable order that could feel no doubts. Their lives were consistent and, as must always be the case when fine characters are possessed of a perfectly sincere faith, they stood out in the world of men and women as something strong and beautiful. Edmund Gosse, in "Father and Son," has described the mental attitude of the type; William James might, equally, have included my father's case as a typical "conversion" in his "Varieties of Religious Experience."

The effect upon the children—there were five of us—followed naturally. My father, apart from incurring much public odium owing to his official position, found himself, and us with him, cut off from the amenities of the social life to which we were otherwise born. Ordinary people, "worldly" as he called them, left us alone. A house where no wine was served at dinner, where morning and evening prayers were *de rigueur*, a guest even being asked to "lead in prayer" perhaps, and where at any suitable moment you might be drawn aside and asked "Have *you* given your soul to Jesus?" was not an attractive house to stay in. We were ostracized. The effect of such disabilities upon us in later life was not considered, for it was hoped each and all of us would consecrate ourselves to God. We were, thus, kept out of the "world" in every possible sense and brought up, though with lavish love and kindness, yet in the narrowest imaginable evangelical path which scents danger in knowledge of any kind not positively helpful to the soul. I, personally, at that time, regarded the temptations of the world with a remote pity, and with a certainty that I should never have the least difficulty in resisting them. Men who smoked and drank and were immoral, who gambled, went to theatres and music-halls and race-meetings, belonged to the submerged and unworthy

portion of mankind. I, in this respect at least, was of the elect, quite sure that the weakness of their world could never stain me personally.

Yet I never shared the beliefs of my parents with anything like genuine pleasure. I was *afraid* they were true, not glad.

Without wholeheartedly sharing my father's faith, however, his religious and emotional temperament, with its imperious need of believing *something*, he certainly bequeathed to me. . . . The evangelical and revivalist movement, at any rate, was the dominant influence in my boyhood's years. People were sharply divided into souls that were saved and those that were—not saved. Moody and Sankey, the American Revivalists, stayed in our house.

I was particularly influenced in this direction by a group of young 'Varsity men who worked with Moody, and who were manly fellows, good cricketers, like the Studd brothers, or Stanley Smith and Montague Beauchamp, men who had rowed in their University boats, and who were far removed from anything effeminate. Of course I thought that what these men did could not be otherwise than fine and worth copying, and I lost no time in attacking everyone I met and asking the most impertinent questions about their souls and fallen natures. By some lucky chance no one kicked me to death—probably because most of my evangelizing work was done at home!

My old nurse I implored to yield herself up to the Saviour, and I felt my results were very poor in her case because I only got affectionate caresses and smiles, and even observations about the holes in my clothes, in return. The fat butler (I assured him) was going headlong down the kitchen stairs to everlasting fire because he showed no symptoms of ecstasy when he met my pleadings with "O, I'm sure 'E died for me all right, Master Algie. I don't feel a bit afraid!"

But all this was genuine so far as I was concerned, and it lasted a considerable time, to my father's great joy,

though not so much, I think, to my mother's. She read far deeper into things. . . .

In a short time I came to look upon the whole phenomena of "conversion," so far as my type of mind and character was concerned, with distrust and weariness. Only the very topmost layer of my personality was affected; evidently, there was no peace or happiness for me that way!

None the less, I had one or two terrible moments; one (I was reading with a private tutor in Somerset for Edinburgh University) when I woke in the very early morning with a choking sensation in my throat, and thought I was going to die. It must have been merely acute indigestion, but I was convinced my last moment had come, and fell into a sweating agony of fear and weakness. I prayed as hard as ever I could, swearing to consecrate myself to God if He would pull me through. I even vowed I would become a missionary and work among the heathen, than which, I was always told, there was no higher type of manhood. But the pain and choking did not pass, and in despair I got up and swallowed half a bottle of pilules of aconite which my mother, an ardent homœopathist, always advised me to take after sneezing or cold shivers. They were sweet and very nice, and the pain certainly began to pass away, but only to leave me with a remorse that I had allowed a mere human medicine to accomplish naturally what God wished to accomplish by His grace. He had been so slow about it, however, that I felt also a kind of anger that He could torture me so long, and as it was the aconite that cured me, and not His grace, I was certainly released from my promise to become a missionary and work among the heathen. And for this small mercy I was duly thankful, though the escape had been a rather narrow one.

A year and a half in a school of the Moravian Brotherhood in the Black Forest, though it showed me another aspect of the same general line of belief, did not wholly obliterate my fear of hell, with its correlated desire for

salvation. The poetry of the semi-religious life in that remote village set among ancient haunted forests, gave to natural idealistic tendencies another turn. The masters, whom we termed Brother, were strenuous, devoted, self-sacrificing men, all later to go forth as Missionaries to Labrador. Humbug, comfort, personal ambition played no part in their lives. The *Liebesmahl* in their little wooden church, for all its odd simplicity, was a genuine and impressive ceremony that touched something in me no church service at home, with Sankey's hymns on a bad harmonium, had ever reached. At this Communion Service, or Love Feast, sweet, weak tea in big white thick cups, followed by a clothes-basket filled with rolls, were handed round, first to the women, who sat on one side of the building, and then to the men and boys on the other side. There was a collective reality about the little ceremony that touched its sincerity with beauty. Similarly was Easter morning beautiful, when we marched in the early twilight towards the little cemetery among the larch trees and stood with our hats off round an open grave, waiting in silence for the sunrise. The air was cool and scented, our mood devotional and solemn. There was a sense of wonder among us. Then, as the sun slipped up above the leagues of forest, the Eight Brothers, singing in parts, led the ninety boys in the great German hymn, "*Christus ist auferstanden. . . .*"

The surroundings, too, of the school influenced me greatly. Those leagues of Black Forest rolling over distant mountains, velvet-coloured, leaping to the sky in grey cliffs, or passing quietly like the sea in immense waves, always singing in the winds, haunted by elves and dwarfs and peopled by charming legends—those forest glades, deep in moss and covered in springtime with wild lily-of-the-valley; those tumbling streams that ran for miles unseen, then emerged to serve the peasants by splashing noisily over the clumsy water-wheel of a brown old sawmill before they again lost themselves among the mossy pine roots; those pools where water-

pixies dwelt, and those little red and brown villages where we slept in our long walks—the whole setting of this Moravian school was so beautifully simple that it lent just the proper atmosphere for lives consecrated without flourish of trumpets to God. It all left upon me an impression of grandeur, of loftiness, and of real religion . . . and of a Deity not specially active on Sundays only.

CHAPTER V

THESE notes aim at describing merely certain surface episodes, and would leave unmentioned of set purpose those inner activities which pertain to the intimate struggles of a growing soul. There is a veil of privacy which only in rarest cases of exceptional value should be lifted. That honesty, moreover, which is an essential of such value, seems almost unattainable. Only a diary, written at the actual time and intended for no one's eye, can hope to achieve the naked sincerity, which could make it useful to lift that veil.

Yet, even with these surface episodes, something of the background against which they danced and vanished must be sketched; to understand them, something of the individual who experienced them must be known. This apology for so much use of the personal pronoun is made once for all.

The failure of the evangelical Christian teaching either to attract deeply or to convince, has been indicated. An eager, impressionable mind lay empty and unstimulated. It fed upon insipid stuff, such as Longfellow, Mrs. Hemans, goody-goody stories, and thousands of religious tracts. It was the days of yellow-backs in three volumes, of Ouida especially, of Miss Braddon, and Wilkie Collins; but novels were strictly forbidden in the house. Lewis Carroll, which my father often read aloud, and Foxe's "Book of Martyrs," which made every Roman Catholic priest seem ominous, were our imaginative fiction. But my chief personal delight was Hebrew poetry, the Psalms, the Song of Solomon, above all the Book of Job (which I devoured alone)—these moved me in a different way and far more deeply.

The mind, meanwhile, without being consciously aware of it, was searching with eager if unrewarded zeal,

until one day Fate threw a strange book in its way—Patanjali's "Yoga Aphorisms," a translation from the Sanskrit. I was about seventeen then, just home from a year and a half in the Moravian Brotherhood School in the Black Forest.

I shall never forget that golden September day when the slight volume, bound in blue, first caught my eye. It was lying beside a shiny black bag on the hall table, and the bag belonged, I knew, to a Mr. Scott, who had come to spend a week with us and to hold a series of meetings under my father's auspices in the village hall. Mr. Scott was an ardent revivalist. He was also—this I grasped even at the time—a cadaverous mass of religious affectations. He was writing a brochure, I learned later, to warn England that Satan was bringing dangerous Eastern teachings to the West, and this book was a first proof of the Fiend's diabolical purpose.

I opened it and read a few paragraphs in the hall. I did not understand them, though they somehow held my mind and produced a curious sense of familiarity, half of wonder, half of satisfaction. A deeper feeling than I had yet known woke in me. I was fascinated. . . . My father's voice calling me to tennis interrupted my reading, and I dropped the book, noticing that it fell behind the table. Hours later, though the bag was gone, the book lay where it had fallen. I stole it. I took it to bed with me and read it through from cover to cover. I read it twice, three times; bits of it I copied out; I did not understand a word of it, but a shutter rushed up in my mind, interest and joy were in me, a big troubling emotion, a conviction that I had found something I had been seeking hungrily for a long time, something I needed, something that, in an odd way, almost seemed familiar.

I repeat—I did not understand a word of it, while yet the meaningless phrases caught me with a revolutionary power. As I read and re-read till my candles guttered, there rose in me a dim consciousness, becoming more and more a growing certainty, that what I read was not entirely new. So strong was this that it demanded audible

expression. In that silent bedroom, dawn not far away, I can hear myself saying aloud: "But I've known all this before—only I've forgotten it." Even the Sanskrit words, given phonetically in brackets, had a familiar look.

Shutter after shutter rose, "lifting a veil and a darkness," letting in glimpses of a radiant and exciting light. Though the mind was too untaught to grasp the full significance of these electric flashes, too unformed to be even intelligently articulate about them, there certainly rushed over my being a singular conviction of the unity of life everywhere and in everything—of its *one-ness*. That objects, the shifting appearance of phenomena, were but a veil concealing some intensely beautiful reality—the beauty shining and divine, the reality bitingly, terrifically actual—this poured over me with a sense of being not so much dis-covered as re-covered. Ignorant as I was, without facts or arguments or reason to support me, this I *knew*.

It is possible the awakening consciousness fringed some state of ecstasy during that long communing with ancient things. . . . The house, at any rate, was still dark, but sunrise not long to come, when at length I stole down into the deserted hall and replaced the little book upon the table.

Those Yoga aphorisms of a long-dead Hindu sage, set between a golden September evening and a guttering candle, marked probably the opening of my mind. . . . The entire paraphernalia of my evangelical teaching thenceforth began to withdraw. Though my father's beliefs had cut deep enough to influence me for many years to come, their dread, with the terror of a personal Satan and an actual Hell, grew less from that moment. The reality of the dogmas was impaired. Here was another outlook upon life, another explanation of the world; caprice was eliminated and justice entered; the present was the result of the past, the future determined by the present; I must reap what I had sown, but, also, I could sow what I wished to reap. Hope was born. Apart from

this was that curious deep sense of familiarity with these Eastern teachings, as with something I understood and in which I felt at home. . . .

Cautiously, I put indirect questions to my father, who at once—the clumsy questions betraying me—detected Satan's subtle handiwork. He was grave and troubled. With affectionate solicitude he told me, finally, a story of naïve horror, intended to point the warning. A young man, who suffered from repeated epileptic fits, had tried every doctor and specialist in vain, when, as a last resort, he followed some friend's counsel of despair, and consulted a medium. The medium, having conferred with his familiar, handed the patient a little locket which he was to wear day and night about his neck, but never on any account to open. The spell that would save him from a repetition of his fits lay inside, but he must resist to the death the curiosity to read it. To the subsequent delight and amazement of everybody, the fits abruptly ceased; the man was cured; until one day, after years of obedience, curiosity overcame him; he opened the brief inscription, and fell down in a fit—dead. The wording, minutely written in red ink, ran as follows: "Let him alone till he drop into Hell!"

The warning, above all the story, acted as a stimulus instead of the reverse. Yet another strange door was set ajar; my eyes, big with wonder and questions, peered through. "Earth's Earliest Ages," by G. H. Pember, an evangelical, but an imaginative evangelical, was placed in my hands, accompanied by further solemn warnings. Pember, a writer of the prophetic school, had style, imagination, a sense of the marvellous, a touch of genuine drama too; he used suggestion admirably, his English was good, he had proportion, he knew where to stop. As a novelist of fantastic kind—an evangelical Wells, a "converted" Dunsany—he might have become a best-seller. He had, moreover, a theme of high imaginative possibilities, based upon a sentence in Genesis (vi. 2)—"The Sons of God saw the Daughters of men that they were fair . . . and took to themselves wives from among

them . . . and there were giants in the earth in those days . . ." These Sons of God were some kind of higher beings, mighty spirits, angels of a sort; but rather fallen angels; their progeny formed a race apart from humans; for some reason, now slipped from my memory, Pember was convinced that this unlawful procreation was being resumed in modern days. The Nephilim, as he called them, were aiming at control of the world, Anti-Christ, a gorgeous but appalling figure, naturally, at their head.

It was a magnificent theme; he treated it, within the limits he set himself, with ingenious conviction. The danger was imminent; the human race, while shuddering, must be on its guard. In the night, in the twinkling of an eye, the catastrophe might come. Signs the Nephilim brought with them were spiritualism, theosophy, the development of secret powers latent in man, a new and awful type of consciousness, magic, and all the rest of the "occult" movement that was beginning to show its hydra head about this time.

In a moment Moody went to the bottom of the class, and Pember reigned in his stead. By hook or by crook I obtained the books that Pember signalled as so dangerously subversive of the truth: "Magic Black and White" by Dr. Franz Hartmann; "The Perfect Way," by Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland; "Esoteric Buddhism," by A. P. Sinnett; "Voice of the Silence," by Mabel Collins; "The Bhagavad Gita," from the Upanishads; and Emma Hardinge Britten's "History of American Spiritualism." My first delicious alarm lest the sky might fall any moment, and Satan appear with the great and terrible Nephilim princes to rule the world, became less threatening. . . . Soon afterwards, too, I happened upon my first novel, Laurence Oliphant's "Massollam," followed, a good deal later, by his "Scientific Religion" and his "Sympneumata." This history of his amazing subservience to Thomas Luke Harris helped to peel another thin skin from my eyes; Oliphant seemed a hero, but Harris a vile humbug. By this time other books had brought grist to the mill as well: Amiel's "Journal Intime"; Drummond's

"Natural Law in the Spiritual World"—I knew Professor Drummond later, when he came to stay with us, and also when he lectured to the students at Edinburgh on Sunday nights, coming from his Glasgow Chair for the purpose: I can still see his large, glowing, far-seeing eyes —Cahagnet's "Arcanes de la Vie Future"; and "Animal Magnetism," by Binet and Féré. The experiments of Braid, and Dr. Esdaille in India, had also come my way.

Such one-sided reading, of course, fed the growing sense of wonder, naturally strong in any case; Shelley coloured it; and nothing offered itself at the time to curb, shape or qualify it. Spiritualism, apart from the exciting phenomena it promised with such confident volubility, left me rather unstirred, but theosophy, of course, I swallowed whole, with its Mahatmas, development of latent powers, memory of past lives, astral consciousness, and description of other beings both superior and inferior to man. It was some years before scientific reading came to check and guide a too exuberant imagination; but, even so I have always taken ideas where I found them, regardless of their propounders; if Tibet and its shining Mahatmas faded, the theories of Karma and reincarnation were older than any modern movement, and the belief in extension of consciousness to some *n*th degree, with its correlative of greater powers and new faculties, have not only remained with me, but have justified themselves. The "Gita," too, remains the profoundest world-scripture I have ever read.

An immediate, happy result of this odd reading, at any rate, I recall with pleasure: my father's Christianity became splendid in my eyes. I realized, even then, that it satisfied his particular and individual vision of truth, while the fact that he lived up to his beliefs nobly and consistently woke a new respect and admiration in me. . . .

By far the strongest influence in my life, however, was Nature; it betrayed itself early, growing in intensity with every year. Bringing comfort, companionship, inspiration, joy, the spell of Nature has remained dominant,

a truly magical spell. Always immense and potent, the years have strengthened it. The early feeling that everything was alive, a dim sense that some kind of consciousness struggled through every form, even that a sort of inarticulate communication with this "other life" was possible, could I but discover the way—these moods coloured its opening wonder. Nature, at any rate, produced effects in me that only something living could produce; though not till I read Fechner's "Zend-Avesta," and, later still, James's "Pluralistic Universe," and Dr. R. M. Bucke's "Cosmic Consciousness" did a possible meaning come to shape my emotional disorder. Fairy tales, in the meanwhile bored me. Real facts were what I sought. That these existed, that I had once known them but had now forgotten them, was thus an early imaginative conviction.

This tendency showed itself even in childhood. We had left the Manor House, Crayford, and now lived in a delightful house at Shortlands, in those days semi-country. It was the time of my horrible private schools —I went to four or five—but the holidays afforded opportunities. . . .

I was a dreamy boy, frequently in tears about nothing except a vague horror of the practical world, full of wild fancies and imagination and a great believer in ghosts, communings with spirits and dealings with charms and amulets, which latter I invented and consecrated myself by the dozen. This was long before I had read a single book.

I loved to climb out of the windows at night with a ladder, and creep among the shadows of the kitchen garden, past the rose trees and under the fruit-tree wall, and so on to the pond where I could launch the boat and practise my incantations in the very middle among the floating weeds that covered the surface in great yellow-green patches. Trees grew closely round the banks, and even on clear nights the stars could hardly pierce through, and all sorts of beings watched me silently from the shore,

crowding among the tree stems, and whispering to themselves about what I was doing.

I cannot say I ever believed actually that my spells would produce any results, but it pleased and thrilled me to think that they might do so; that the scum of weeds might slowly part to show the face of a water-nixie, or that the forms hovering on the banks might flit across to me and let me see their outline against the stars.

Everything I did and felt in this way was evolved out of my inner consciousness, and even after I had passed into long trousers I loved the night, the shadows, empty rooms and haunted woods.

On returning from these nightly expeditions to the pond, the sight of the old country-house against the sky always excited me strangely. Three cedars of Lebanon flanked it on the side I climbed out, towering aloft with their great funereal branches, and I thought of all the people asleep in their silent rooms, and wondered how they could be so dull and unenterprising, when out here they could see these sweeping branches and hear the wind sighing so beautifully among the needles. These people, it seemed to me at such moments, belonged to a different race. I had nothing in common with them. Night and stars and trees and wind and rain were the things I had to do with and wanted. They were alive and personal, stirring my depths within, full of messages and meanings, whereas my parents and sisters and brother, all indoors and asleep, were mere accidents, and apart from my real life and self. My friend the under-gardener always took the ladder away early in the morning.

Sometimes an elder sister accompanied me on these excursions. She, too, loved mystery, and the peopled darkness, but she was also practical. On returning to her room in the early morning we always found eggs ready to boil, cake and cold plum-pudding perhaps, or some such satisfying morsels to fill the void. She was always wonderful to me in those days. Very handsome, dark, with glowing eyes and a keen interest in the undertaking, she

came down the ladder and stepped along the garden paths more like a fairy being than a mortal, and I always enjoyed the event twice as much when she accompanied me. In the day-time she faded back into the dull elder sister and seemed a different person altogether. I never reconcile the two.

This childish manifestation of an overpowering passion changed later, in form, of course, but not essentially much in spirit. Forests, mountains, desolate places, especially perhaps open spaces like the prairies or the desert, but even, too, the simple fields, the lanes, and little hills, offered an actual sense of companionship no human intercourse could possibly provide. In times of trouble, as equally in times of joy, it was to Nature I ever turned instinctively. In those moments of deepest feeling when individuals must necessarily be alone, yet stand at the same time in most urgent need of understanding companionship, it was Nature and Nature only that could comfort me. When the cable came, suddenly announcing my father's death, I ran straight into the woods. . . . This call sounded above all other calls, music coming so far behind it as to seem an " also ran." Even in those few, rare times of later life, when I fancied myself in love, this spell would operate—a sound of rain, a certain touch of colour in the sky, the scent of a wood-fire smoke, the lovely cry of some singing wind against the walls or window—and the human appeal would fade in me, or, at least, its transitory character become pitifully revealed. The strange sense of a oneness with Nature was an imperious and royal spell that overmastered all other spells, nor can the hint of comedy lessen its reality. Its religious origin appears, perhaps, in the fact that sometimes, during its fullest manifestation, a desire stirred in me to leave a practical, utilitarian world I loathed and become—a monk!

Another effect, in troubled later years especially, was noticeable; its dwarfing effect upon the events, whatever they might be, of daily life. So intense, so flooding, was the elation of joy Nature brought, that after such moments even the gravest worldly matters, as well as the people

concerned in these, seemed trivial and insignificant. Nature introduced a vaster scale of perspective against which a truer proportion appeared. There lay in the experience some cosmic touch of glory that, by contrast, left all else commonplace and unimportant. The great gods of wind and fire and earth and water swept by on flaming stars, and the ordinary life of the little planet seemed very small, man with his tiny passions and few years of struggle and vain longings, almost futile. One's own troubles, seen in this new perspective, disappeared, while, at the same time, the heart filled with an immense understanding love and charity towards all the world—which, alas, also soon disappeared.

It is difficult to put into intelligible, convincing words the irresistible character of this Nature-spell that invades heart and brain like a drenching sea, and produces a sense of rapture, of ecstasy, compared to which the highest conceivable worldly joy becomes merely insipid. . . . Heat from this magical source was always more or less present in my mind from a very early age, though, of course, no attempt to analyse or explain it was then possible; but, in bitter years to come, the joy and comfort Nature gave became a real and only solace. When possession was at its full height, the ordinary world, and my particular little troubles with it, fell away like so much dust; the whole fabric of men and women, commerce and politics, even the destinies of nations, became a passing show of shadows, while the visible and tangible world showed itself as but a temporary and limited representation of a real world elsewhere whose threshold I had for a moment touched.

Others, of course, have known similar experiences, but, being better equipped, have understood how to correlate them to ordinary life. Richard Jefferies explained them. Whitman tasted expansion of consciousness in many ways; Fechner made a grandiose system of them; Edward Carpenter deliberately welcomed them; Jacob Boehme, Plotinus, and many others have tried to fix their nature and essence in terms, respectively, of religion and

philosophy ; and William James has reviewed them with an insight as though he had had experienced them himself. Whatever their value, they remain authentic, the sense of oneness of life their common denominator, a conviction of consciousness pervading all forms everywhere their inseparable characteristic.

If Kentish gardens saw the birth of this delight, the Black Forest offered further opportunities for its enjoyment, and a year in a village of the Swiss Jura Mountains to learn French—I often wandered all night in the big pine forests without my tutor, a bee-keeping pasteur, at Bôle, near Neuchâtel, discovering my absence—intensified it. Without it something starved in me. It was a persistent craving, often a wasting *nostalgia*, that cried for satisfaction as the whole body cries for covering when cold, and Nature provided a companionship, a joy, a bliss, that no human intercourse has ever approached, much less equalled. It remains the keenest, deepest sensation of its kind I have known. . . .

Here, in Toronto, opportunities multiplied, and just when they were needed : in times of difficulty and trouble the call of Nature became paramount ; during the vicissitudes of dairy and hotel the wild hinterland behind the town, with its lakes and forests, were a haven often sought. Among my friends were many, of course, who enjoyed a day "in the country," but one man only who understood a little the feelings I have tried to describe, even if he did not wholly share them. This was Arnold Haultain, a married man, tied to an office all day long, private secretary to Goldwin Smith (whose life, I think, he subsequently wrote), and editor of a weekly periodical called *The Week*. He was my senior by many years . . . At three in the morning, sometimes, he would call for me at the dairy in College Street, and we would tramp out miles to enjoy the magic of sunrise in a wood north of the city. And such an effort was only possible to a soul to whom it was a necessity . . . The intensity of early dreams and aspirations, what energy lies in them ! In later life, though they may have solidified and become part of the character,

that original fiery energy is gone. A dreadful doggerel I wrote at this time, Haultain used in his paper, and its revealing betrayal of inner tendencies is the excuse for its reproduction here. It appeared the same week its author bought the Hub Hotel and started business with Kay, as "The Hub Wine Company."

LINES TO A DREAMER

O change all this thinking, imagining, hoping to be;
Change dreaming to action and work; there's a God in your will.
Self-mastery and courage and confidence make a man free,
And doing is stronger than dreaming for good or for ill.

Then make a beginning; don't lie like an infant and weep.
Begin with the dearest and crush some delight-giving sin
Right out of your life, with a purpose of death before sleep;
A passion controlled is an index of power within.

Some hard self-denial; let no one suspect it at all.
With ruthless self-torture continue, nor half an inch yield,
Step fearless and bravely; hold on and believe—you won't fall;
Companions you've none but the best on this grim battle-field.

Stagnation means death. If you cannot advance you retreat;
Steel purpose maintain; let it be the first aim of your life;
Beware of those mushroom resolves as impulsive as fleet,
And remember, the nobler the end the more deadly the strife.

For the hope that another may save you is coward and vain,
And the ladder, by which you must climb to yon far starry height,
Is of cast-iron rungs from the furnace of suffering and pain.
Then forward; and courage! from darkness to truth's golden light.

CHAPTER VI

THE pictures that have occupied two chapters, flashed and vanished, lasting a few moments only. It was Kay's voice that interrupted them:

"This is my partner, Mr. Blackwood," he was saying, as he came from the dining-room door, accompanied by an undersized little man with sharp, beady eyes set in a face like a rat's, with deep lines upon a skin as white as paper. I shook hands with Billy Bingham, proprietor of the Hub, the man whose disreputable character had made it a disgrace to the City of Churches.

Of the conversation that followed, though I heard every word of it, only a blurred memory remained when we left the building half an hour later. I was in two worlds—innocent Kent and up-to-date Toronto—while Kay and Bingham talked. Mysterious phrases chased pregnant business terms in quick succession: Goodwill, stock in hand, buying liquor at thirty days, cash value of the licence, and heaven knows what else besides. Kay was marvellous, I thought. The sporting goods business had apparently taught him everything. Two hundred per cent. profit, rapid turn over, sell out at top price, were other vivid sentences I caught in part, while I stared and listened, feigning no doubt a comprehension that was not mine. The glow of immense success to come, at any rate, shone somehow about the nasty face of that cunning little Billy Bingham, as he painted our future in radiant colours. Kay was beaming.

"A short period of horror," I remember thinking, for the sanguine fires lit me too, "and we shall be independent men! It's probably worth it. Canada's a free country. What's impossible at home is possible here. Opportunities must be seized . . .!"

Then Bingham's white face retreated, his beady eyes became twin points of glittering light, and another picture

slid noiselessly before them. Euston Station a few short months ago, myself tightly wedged in a crowded third-class carriage, the train to Liverpool slowly moving out, and my father's tall figure standing on the platform—this picture hid the Hub and Bingham and John Kay. The serious blue eyes, fixed on mine with love and tenderness, could not conceal the deep anxiety they betrayed for my future. Behind them, though actually at the Manor House, Crayford, fixed on a page of the Bible, or perhaps closed in earnest prayer, the eyes of my mother rose up too . . . The train moved faster, the upright figure and the grave, sad face, though lit by a momentary smile of encouragement, were hidden slowly by the edge of the carriage window. I was too shy to wave my hand, and far too sensitive of what the carriage-full of men would think if I moved to the window and spoke, or worse, gave the good-bye kiss I burned to give. So the straight line of that implacable wooden sash slid across both face and figure, cutting our stare cruelly in the middle.

It was the last time I saw my father; a year later he was dead; and ten years were to pass before I saw my mother again. Before this—to look ahead for a second—some enterprising Toronto friend, with evangelical tact, wrote to my father . . . "your son is keeping a tavern," and my father, calling my brother into his study where he laid all problems before his God with prayer, told him in a broken voice and with tears in his eyes: "He is lost; his soul is lost. Algie has gone to—Hell!" . . .

My vision faded. My broad-shouldered friend and his little rat-faced companion stood with their elbows on the bar. I saw six small glasses and a big dark bottle. Three of the former were filled to the brim with neat rye whisky, the other three, "the chasers" as they were called, held soda-water.

"Drink hearty," rasped Bingham's grating voice, as he tossed down his liquor at a gulp, Kay doing the same, then swallowing the soda-water.

I moved to the swing-doors. I had never touched spirits, and loathed the mere smell of them. I cannot

pretend that any principle was involved; it was simply that the mere idea of swallowing raw whisky gave me nausea. I saw Kay give me a quick look. "He'll be offended if you don't take something," it said plainly. I was, besides, familiar with the customs of the country, at any rate in theory.

"Have something else," invited Bingham, "if you don't like it straight."

I shook my head, mumbling something about it's being too early in the day, and I shall never forget the look that came into that cunning little face. But he was not offended. He put his hand on Kay's arm. "Now, see here," he said with seriousness, "that's dead right. That's good business every time. Never drink yourselves, and you'll make it a success. Your partner's got the right idea, and I tell you straight: never touch a drop of liquor till after closing hours. You'll be asked to drink all day long. Everybody will want to drink with the new management. Every customer that walks in will say 'What's yours?' before you even know his name. Now, see here, boys, listen to me—you *can't* do it! You'll be blind to the world before eleven o'clock. *I* tell you, and I *know!*"

"How are you to refuse?" asked Kay.

"I'll give you a tip: drink tea!"

"Tea!"

"Have your bottle of tea. Tell your bar-tenders. It's the same colour as rye whisky. No one'll ever know. The boss can always have his own private bottle. Well, yours is tea. See?" And he winked with a leer like some intelligent reptile.

We shook hands, as he saw us into the street.

"You'll take a cheque, I suppose?" I heard Kay say just before we moved off.

"A marked cheque, yes," was the reply. The phrase meant that the bank marked the cheque as good for the amount.

"It's all fixed then," returned Kay.

"All fixed," said Bingham, and the swing-doors closed upon his unpleasant face as we went out into the street.

CHAPTER VII

THE influences that decided the purchase of the Hub were emotional, at any rate, not rational; there lay some reaction in me, as of revolt. "You can do things out here you could not do at home," ran like a song through the heart all day long, and life seemed to hold its arms wide open. Fortunes were quickly made. Speculation was rife. Pork went up and wheat went down, and thousands were made or lost in a few hours. No enterprise was despised, provided it succeeded. All this had its effect upon an impressionable and ignorant youth whose mind now touched so-called real life for the first time. The example of others had its influence, too. The town was sprinkled with young Englishmen, but untrained Englishmen the country did not need, though it needed their money; and this money they speedily exchanged, just as I had done, for experience—and then tried to find work.

The pathos of it all was, though, that for an average young Englishman to find a decent job was impossible. I was among the unsuccessful ones. Kay was another, but Kay and myself were now—we thought—to prove the exception.

"We'll show 'em!" was the way Kay's sanguine twenty-three years phrased it. We both knew men of splendid education and real ability, earning precarious livings in positions that would have been ludicrous if they were not so pathetic. Men from Oxford and Cambridge, with first rate classical training, were slinging drinks behind bars, or running about the country persuading the farmers to insure their stacks and outhouses; others with knowledge of languages and pronounced literary talent were adding figures in subordinate positions in brokers' offices. But by far the greater number were working as common labourers for small farmers all over the country.

"They missed their chance when it came," Kay repeated. "We won't miss ours. A chance like the Hub won't come twice." A year of disagreeable, uncongenial work and then—success! Retire! Off to the primeval woods, canoes, Indians, camp fires, books . . . a dozen dreams flamed up.

Within a month we had completed the purchase, and the Hub opened with flying colours and high hopes; the newspapers gave us what they called a "send off"; both "House of Lords" and "House of Commons" were packed; the cash-registers clicked and rang all day, and the Hub, swept and garnished, fairly sparkled with the atmosphere of success, congratulations, and promise of good business. Billy Bingham's association with it was a thing of the past; it became the most respectable place of its kind in the whole town.

All day long the shoal of customers flocked in and rattled their money across the busy counters. Each individual wanted a word with the proprietors. Buyers and brewery agents poured in too, asking for orders, and newspaper reporters took notes for descriptive articles which duly appeared next morning. The dining-room did a roaring trade and every stool at the long lunch counter had its occupant. How easy it all seemed! And no one the worse for liquor! Everybody was beaming, and, as a partner in the Hub Wine Company, I already felt that my failure in the dairy farm was forgotten, an unlucky incident at most; a boyish episode due to inexperience, but now atoned for.

Lord Dufferin, a few years before, had been Governor-General of Canada, and a huge framed photograph of him hung above the cold meat, game pies and salads of the lunch counter. A connexion of my father's, the newspapers had insisted upon a closer relationship, and while some thought he would do better as a first cousin, others preferred him as my uncle. As an exceedingly popular Governor-General, his place above the good Canadian food seemed appropriate at any rate, and the number of customers, both known and unknown, who congratulated me

upon our distinguished framed patron, gave me the odd feeling that somehow the shock to my father was thereby lessened. The stories of what Dufferin and his wife had done for Tom, Dick and Harry, for their wives and their children or their dogs, told to me beside our House of Lords' bar that opening day proved good for business. I had come to the colony somewhat overburdened with distinguished relations of heavy calibre who, to extend the simile a little, neither now nor later, ever fired a single shot on my behalf. The mere inertia of their names, indeed, weighed down my subsequent New York days with the natural suspicion that a young man so well born must have done something dreadful at home to be forced to pose to artists for a living. Why, otherwise, should he suffer exile in the underworld of a city across the seas? Lord Dufferin's photograph augustly throned above the Hub luncheon counter, certainly, however, fired a shot on my behalf, making the cash-registers clink frequently. His effect on our bar-trade, innocently uncalculated, deserves this word of gratitude.

There were three white-coated bar-tenders in the House of Lords, Jimmy Martin, their principal, in charge of it; a couple managed the House of Commons trade in the lower bar, down a step and through an arch; and here, too, were tables and chairs, rooms curtained off, and other facilities for back-street customers who wanted to sit and talk over their beer. Between the two, a door in the wall led to my own quarters upstairs by means of a private staircase. Sharp on eleven we closed our doors that first night, and proceeded, with Jimmy Martin's aid, to open the cash-registers and count up our takings. There was just under 250 dollars, or £50 in English money. Then, having said good night to our chief bar-tender, we spent a happy hour making calculations for the future. The first day, of course, could not be taken as an average, but prospects, we assured ourselves, were brilliant. Later we were to discover things that were to prove a source of endless trouble and vexation of spirit to us both —daily worries we both learned to dread. At the moment,

however, it was in sanguine mood that I went to bed that night of our opening day. The money was locked away, ready for me to take to the bank next morning—our first deposit. Before that I must be at the market to buy provisions—six o'clock—and Kay was to be in attendance in the bars at nine-thirty.

"It's a go all right," were his good-night words, as he thumped down my private staircase and let himself into the street with his latch-key.

Lucky beggar! He hadn't got to write home and explain to evangelical and teetotal parents what he was doing!

Some customers, I discovered, arrived early. That a man should want to swallow raw spirits at 9 A.M. amazed me. Some of these were men we knew socially; with one of them, who arrived regularly at 9.15, I often dined in his cosy little bungalow beside the lake. His wife was charming, I played with his children. He was a lawyer. He came for what he called an "eye-opener." Another of this early brigade was a stockbroker, who later made a fortune speculating in wheat on margin, lost it again, and disappeared mysteriously across the border into the States. His manner of taking his "eye-opener" was peculiar, puzzling me for a long time. I had never seen it before. It made me laugh heartily the first morning, for I thought he was doing it to amuse me—till his injured expression corrected me. Producing a long silk handkerchief, he flung it round his neck, one end held by the hand that also held his brimming glass. With the free hand he then pulled the other end very slowly round his collar, levering thus the shaking glass to his lips. Unless he used this pulley, the glass shook and rattled so violently against his teeth that its contents would be spilt before he could get it into his mouth. The horror of it suddenly dawned on me. I was appalled. The stuff that poisoned this nervous wreck was sold by myself and partner at 100 per cent. profit!

"If he doesn't get it here," said Kay, "he'll go to Tim Sullivan's across the way, and get bad liquor. Ours at least is pure."

During the long twelve hours that the Hub was open either Kay or myself was always on duty, talking to customers, keeping an eye (as we hoped !) on the bar-tenders, showing ourselves with an air of authority in the House of Commons when, as usually, it became too rowdy—Kay enjoying the occasional "chucking out." At lunch time and from four to half-past six or seven o'clock, the bars were invariably crowded. The amount of milkless tea we drank ought to have poisoned us both, but we never fell from grace in this respect, and we kept faithfully, too, to Jimmy Martin's advice never to "put 'em up" for others.

Days were long and arduous. Though we soon closed the dining room after lunch, doing no supper trade, there were public dinners once or twice a week for Masonic societies, football clubs and the like, and at these one or other of the proprietors was expected to show himself. To my great relief, Kay rather enjoyed this light duty. His talent for acting was often in demand too; he would don his Henry Irving wig and give the company an imitation of the great actor in "The Bells."

Kay was very successful at these "banquets," and sometimes a Society would engage the room on the condition that he performed for them after dinner. What annoyed him was that "the silly idiots always order champagne!" There was no profit worth mentioning in "wine," as it was called. The profit was in beer and "liquor." The histrionic talent, at any rate, was an accomplishment that proved useful later in our difficult New York days, when Kay not only got a job on the stage himself, but provided me with a part as well.

The shadow of that East 19th Street boarding-house was already drawing nearer . . . and another customer of the Hub who was to share it with us was Louis B——, a voluble, high-strung fat little Frenchman, of mercurial temperament and great musical gifts. When a Hub banquet had seen enough of the Irving wig, and expressed a wish to hear the other proprietor, it was always Louis B—— who accompanied my fiddle on the piano. Raff's

"Cavatina" was tolerated, the "Berçeuse" from "Jocelyn" enjoyed, but the popular songs of the day, Louis extemporizing all accompaniments with his perfect touch, it was these that were good for "business." The fat, good-natured little man, with his bright dark eyes and crisp curly black hair, demanded several absinthes before he would play. He was a born musician. He loved, in the order mentioned, music, horses, his wife, and from the last he always had to obtain permission to "play at the Hub." Towards midnight he would dash to the telephone and say pleadingly to his wife: "They want me to play one more piece—only one. Do you mind? I shan't be long!"

The Hub Wine Company, camouflaging the saloon business of two foolish young idiots, passed through its phases towards the inevitable collapse. Business declined; credit grew difficult; prompt payment for supplies more difficult still. We closed the Dining Room, then the House of Commons. The Banquets ceased. Selling out at "top price" became a dream, loss of all my capital a fact. Those were funereal days. To me it was a six months' horror. The impulsive purchase was paid for dearly. It was not only the declining business, the approaching loss of my small capital, the prospect of presently working for some farmer at a dollar a day and green tea—it was not these things I chiefly felt. It was, rather, the fact that I had taken a step downhill, betrayed some imagined ideal in me, shown myself willing to "sell my soul" for filthy lucre. The price, though not paid in lucre, was certainly paid in mental anguish, and the letters from home, though patient, generously forgiving, even understanding, increased this tenfold. . . .

My own nature, meanwhile, wholly apart from any other influence, sought what relief it could. My heart had never really been in the venture, my body now kept out of it as much as possible. The loathing I had felt for the place from the very beginning was quite apart from any question of success or failure. I hated the very atmosphere, the faces of the staff, the sound of voices as I

approached the swinging doors. While attending strictly to business, never shortening my hours on duty by five minutes, and eagerly helping Kay in our efforts to get in another partner with money, my relief when once outside the actual building was immense. We had engaged a new manager, whose popularity in the town—he was a great cricketer—brought considerable fresh custom, but whose chief value in my eyes lay in the fact that I need not be present quite as much as before. Collins, who weighed twenty stone, was a character. Known for some reason as "the Duke," he had no other title to nobility. He helped trade for a few brief weeks, but also helped himself at the same time, and his exit, not unlike that of Jimmy—who was "fired" for the same reason—was attended by threats of a slander suit, which also, like Jimmy's, was set down in the Greek kalends.

CHAPTER VIII

ONE effect of these long, unhappy months, anyhow, was to emphasize another, and that the principal side, of my nature. The daily effort of forcing myself to do what I hated so intensely, was succeeded by the equal and opposite reaction of enjoying tremendously my free hours of relaxation. When the swing-doors closed behind me, my mind closed too upon all memory of the hated Hub. It was shut out, forgotten, non-existent. I flew instinctively to what comforted and made me happy. Gorged with the reading of poetry and of idealistic, mystical books, an insatiable sense of wonder with a childish love of the marvellous added to it, my disappointing experience of practical realities demanded compensation as a safety-valve, if as nothing more. I found these in Nature, music, and in the companionship of a few people I will presently describe. Out of those prison-like swing-doors I invariably went, either with the fiddle-case in my hand, or with food in my pocket and a light cloak as blanket for sleeping out. Concerts and organ recitals were not enough; more than to listen, I wanted to play myself; and Louis B—— was usually as enthusiastic as I. The music was a deep delight to me, but the sleeping under the stars I enjoyed most.

Those lonely little camp fires have left vivid pictures in the mind. An East-bound tram soon took one beyond the city, where the shores of Lake Ontario stretched their deserted sands for miles. There was always fresh water to be found for boiling tea, lots of driftwood lying about, and the sand made a comfortable bed. Many a night of that sweet Indian summer I saw the moon rise or set over the water, and lay watching the stars until the sunrise came. One spot in particular was a favourite with me, because, just over the high loam cliffs that lined

the shore, there was an enormous field of tomatoes, and while Jimmy was helping himself to the Hub cash under Kay's eyes in the city, I helped myself to half a dozen of the farmer's ripe tomatoes. The Hub, however, of set purpose, formed no part of my thoughts, my reveries and dreams being of a very different, and far more interesting, kind. . . .

A night in the woods, though distance made it more difficult, comforted me even more than the Lake expeditions. I kept the woods usually for Saturday night, when the next day left me free as well.

A pine forest beyond Rosedale was my favourite haunt, for it was (in those days) quite deserted and several miles from the nearest farm, and in the heart of it lay a secluded little lake with reedy shores and deep blue water. Here I lay and communed, the world of hotels, insurance, even of Methodists, very far away. The hum of the city could not reach me, though its glare was faintly visible in the sky. There were no signs of men ; no sounds of human life ; not even a dog's bark—nothing but a sighing wind and lapping water and a sort of earth-murmur under the trees, and I used to think that God, whatever He was, or the great spiritual forces that I believed lay behind all phenomena, and perhaps were the moving life of the elements themselves, must be nearer to one's consciousness in places like this than among the bustling of men in the towns and houses. As the material world faded away among the shadows, I felt dimly the real spiritual world behind shining through . . . I meditated on the meaning of these dreams till the veil over outer things seemed very thin ; diving down into my inner consciousness as deeply as I could till a stream of tremendous yearning for the realities that lay beyond appearances poured out of me into the night. . . . The hours passed with magical swiftness, and my dreaming usually ended in sleep, for I often woke in the chilly time just before the dawn, lying sideways on the pine needles, and saw the trees outlined sharply against the Eastern sky, and the lake water still and clear, and heard the dawn-wind

just beginning to sing overhead. The laughter of a loon would sound, the call of an owl, the cry of a whip-poor-will; and then—the sun was up.

Thought ran, on these lonely nights, to everything except to present or recent happenings. Life, already half over as, at twenty-one, it then seemed to me, had proved a failure; my few trivial experiences appeared gigantic and oppressive. I felt very old. Present conditions, being unhappy and promising to become more unhappy still, I left aside. I had "accepted" them as Karma, I must go through with them, but there was no need to intensify or prolong unhappiness by dwelling on them. I therefore dismissed them, thought wandering to other things. All was coloured, shaped, directed by those Eastern teachings in which I was then entirely absorbed . . . and the chief problem in my mind at the time, was to master the method of accepting, facing, exhausting, whatever life might bring, while being, as the Bhagavad Gita described, "indifferent to results," unaffected, that is, by the "fruits of action." Detachment, yet without shirking, was the nearest equivalent phrase I could find; a state, anyhow, stronger than the Christian "resignation," which woke contempt in me. . . .

Unhappiness, though it may seem trivial now, both as to cause and quality, was very deep in me at the time. It had wakened an understanding of certain things I had read—as in the stolen "Patanjali" years before—without then grasping what they meant. These things I now was beginning to reach by an inner experience of them, rather than by an intellectual comprehension merely. . . . And, as thought ran backwards, escaping the unpleasant Hub and Dairy, to earlier days in the Black Forest School, to the Jura Mountains village, to family holidays among the Alps or on the west coast of Scotland, it reached in due course the year spent at Edinburgh University just before I left for Canada, and so to individuals there who had strongly influenced me:

I recalled Dr. H——who used hypnotism in his practice, taught me various methods of using it, and often

admitted me to private experiments in his study. He explained many a text-book for me. He had urged me to give up the idea of farming in Canada, and to read for medicine and become a doctor. "Specialize," he said (in 1883). "By the time you are qualified Suggestion will be a recognized therapeutic agent, accepted by all, and accomplishing marvellous results. Become a mental specialist."

I lay under my pine trees, wondering if it were still too late . . . but speculating, further and chiefly, about those other states of consciousness, since called "subliminal," which his experiments had convinced me were of untold importance, both to the individual and to the race. Any lawful method of extending the field of consciousness, of increasing its scope, of developing latent faculties, with its corollary of greater knowledge and greater powers, excited and interested me more than the immediate prospect of making a million. . . .

This doctor's family were sincere and convinced spiritualists. He let them be, paying no attention to them, yet pointing out to me privately the "secondary" state into which his wife, as the medium, could throw herself at will. His son had an Amati violin; we played together; I was invited to many séances. The power of reading a "sitter's" mind I often witnessed, my own unuttered thoughts often being announced as the communication from some "guide" or "spirit friend." But for the doctor's private exposition, I might doubtless have been otherwise persuaded and shared my hostess's convictions.

Some of the "communications" came back in memory, none the less, as I lay beside the little lake and watched the firelight reflected with the stars: "There is an Indian here; he says he comes for you. He is a medicine man. He says you are one, too. You have great healing power. He keeps repeating the word 'scratch.'" The dubious word meant "write"; I was to become a writer, a prophesy that woke no interest in me at all. . . . Another communication delved into the past: "You have been an Indian in a recent life, and you will go back to their country

to work off certain painful Karma. You were Aztec, Inca, Egyptian, and, before that again, Atlantean. With the world to-day you have nothing in common, for none of the souls you knew have come back with you. Nature means more to you than human beings. Beware!" The last word alarmed me a good deal until the doctor's humorous exposition killed any malefic suggestion. The horoscope his wife cast and read for me, however, he refused to be bothered with; he could not, therefore, comfort me by explaining away a disturbing sentence: "All your planets are beneficent, but were just below the horizon at the hour of your birth. This means that you will come very near to success in all you undertake, yet never quite achieve it."

These memories slipped in their series across my mind, as the embers of my fire faded and the night drew on. Swiftly they came and passed, each leaving its little trail of dust, its faint emotion, yet leading always to a stronger ghost whose memory still bulked largely in my mind—the ghost of a Hindu student. He was a fourth-year man, about to become a qualified doctor, and I met him first in the dissecting room, where occasionally I played at studying anatomy. We first became intimate friends over the dissection of a leg. It was he who explained "Patanjali" to me. He was a very gifted and unusual being. He showed me strange methods of breathing, of concentration, of meditation. He made clear a thousand half-conscious dreams and memories in me. He was mysterious but sincere, living his theories in practice. We went for great walks along the Forth, watching the Forth Bridge then being built; down the coast to St. Abb's Head and Coldingham; deep into the recesses of the Pentlands, where, more than once, we slept in the open. We made curious and interesting experiments together. . . . Years later—he is still alive—I drew upon a fraction of his personality in two books, "John Silence" and "Julius Le Vallon." . . .

Much that he explained and taught me, much that he believed and practised, came back vividly during these

nightly vigils in the woods, while I listened to the weird laughter of the loons like the voices of women far away, and watched the Northern Lights flash in their strange majesty from the horizon to mid-heaven. Unhappiness was making my real life sink deeper. No boy, I am sure, sought for what he believed would prove the realities with more passionate intensity than I did. It is curious now to look back upon those grave experiments first taught me by my Hindu friend, who assured me that the way to rob emotions of their power was to refuse to identify one's "self" with them, this real "self" merely looking on as a spectator, apart, detached; and that the outer events of life had small importance, what mattered being solely one's inner attitude to them, one's interpretation of them. . . .

From these hours spent alone with Nature, as also from the hours of music with Louis B—— I returned, at any rate, refreshed and invigorated to my loathsome bars. Personal troubles seemed less important, less oppressive; they were, after all, but brief episodes in a single life; as Karma, they had to be faced, gone through with; they had something to teach, and I must learn the lesson, or else miss one of the objects of my being. Watching the starry heavens through hours of imaginative reflection brought a bigger perspective in which individual worries found reduced proportion. My thoughts introduced a yet vaster perspective still. The difficulty was to keep the point of view when the mood that encouraged it was gone. After a few hours in the House of Lords perspective was apt to dwindle again. . . .

When the winter months made sleeping out impossible, and Louis B—— was not available, my precious hours of freedom would be spent with a young agnostic doctor dying of consumption; with the Professor of History in Toronto University—a sterling, sympathetic man, a true Christian of intellectual type, and a big, genuine soul who never thought of himself in the real help he gave me unfailingly with both hands; or, lastly, with an enthusiast who shared my quest for what we called "the Realities."

With all three I had made close friends during the first prosperous days of the Dairy; the Professor's family had been customers for milk and eggs; the young doctor, living in my boarding-house, had been a pupil in my French and German class.

The third was a Scotsman, fairly well educated, about thirty years of age, who, while fully in sympathy with my line of thinking, had succeeded in reducing his dreams to some sort of order so that they did not interfere with his ordinary, practical career and yet were the guiding rule of his life.

He was in the cement business, and his clothes, even on Sunday, were always covered with a fine white dust, for he was unmarried and lived alone in a single room. He made a bare living at his work, but was thoroughly conscientious and devoted to the interests of his employer, and all he asked was steady work and fair remuneration for the rest of his life. He was a real mystic by temperament, though he belonged to no particular tradition. The world for him was but a show of false appearances that the senses gathered; the realities behind were spiritual. He believed that his soul had existed for ever and would never cease to exist, and that his ego would continue to expand and develop according to the life he led, and shaped by his thoughts and acts (but especially by his thoughts) to all eternity. This world for him was a schoolroom, a place of difficult discipline and learning, and the lessons he was learning were determined logically and justly by his previous living and previous mistakes. Talents or disabilities, equally, were the results of former action. . . .

But to the ordinary man he appeared simply as a rather dull everyday worker, without any worldly ambition, absolutely honest and trustworthy, and always occupying a subordinate position in practical affairs.

In the "old country" he had belonged to some sort of society that kept alive traditions of teaching methods of spiritual development, and he told me much concerning their theories that immense latent powers lay in the depths of one's being and could be educed by suitable living,

and the period in the "schoolroom of this world," as he called it, could be shortened and the progress of one's real development hastened. It all lay, with him, in learning how to concentrate the faculties on this inner life, without neglecting the duties of the position one held to family or employer, and thus reducing the life of the body and the senses to the minimum that was consistent with health and ordinary duty. In this way he believed new forces would awaken to life, and new parts of one's being be stimulated into activity, and in due course one would become conscious of a new spiritual region with the spiritual senses adapted to it. It amounted, of course, to an expansion of consciousness.

All this, naturally, interested me very much indeed, and I spent hours talking with this cement maker, and many more hours reading the books he lent me and thinking about them. My friend helped in this extension. Carl du Prel's "Philosophy of Mysticism" was a book to injure no one.

He had published one or two volumes of minor poetry, and his verse, though poor in form, caught all through it the elusive quality of genuine mystical poetry, unearthly, touching the stars, and wakening in the reader the note of yearning for the highest things. I took him with me several times to my little private grove, and he would recite these verses to me in a way that made them sound very different from my own reading of them. And as he lay beside the lake and I heard his reedy voice mingling with the wind in the trees, and watched his watery blue eyes shine across the smoke of our fire, I realized that the value of his poems lay in the fact that they were a perfectly true expression of his self—of his small, mystical, unselfish and oddly elemental soul searching after the God that should finally absorb him up into something greater. I do not wish to criticize him, but only to picture what I saw. His attenuated body, and long thin fingers, his shabby clothes covered with white dust lying by my side under the stars, his eyes looking beyond the world, and the sound of his thin voice that lost half its words some-

where in the wind—the picture is complete in every detail in my mind to this day. His reasoning powers were slight, for like all true mystics he believed in the intuitive perception of truth ; but, coming into my life just at this time, he came with influence and a good deal of stimulus too. From the "House of Commons" to his dream-laden atmosphere provided a contrast that brought relief, at any rate.

This mystical minor poet in the cement business had several friends like himself, but no one of them possessed his value, because no one of them practised their beliefs. They talked well and were sincere up to a point, but not to the point of making sacrifices for their faith. It was always with them a future hope. One, however, must be excepted—a woman. She was over sixty and always dressed in black, with crêpe scattered all over her, and a large white face, and shining eyes, and great bags under them. She had been a vegetarian for years. In spite of her size she looked so ethereal that a puff of wind might have blown her across the street. All her friends and relations had "passed over," and her thoughts were evidently centred in the beyond, so far as she herself was concerned. She had means of her own, but spent most of them in helping others. There was no humbug about her. She claimed to have what she called "continuous consciousness," and at night, when her body lay down and the brain slept, she focused her Self in some spiritual region of her being, and never lost consciousness. She saw her body lying there, and knew the brain was asleep, but she meanwhile became active elsewhere, for she declared a spirit could never sleep, and it was only the body that became too weary at the end of the day to answer to the spirit's requirements. In sleep the body, left empty by the spirit, slept, and memory, being in the brain, became inactive. But as soon as one had learned to realize one's spirit, sleep involved no loss of consciousness and memory was continuous.

Her accounts of her experiences in the night thrilled me . . . While she talked her face grew so white that it

almost shone. It was a beaming, good, loving face, and the woman was honest, even if deluded. She radiated kindness and sympathy from her person. She had a way of screwing up her eyes when speaking, stepping back a few paces, and then coming suddenly forward again as though she meant to jump across the room, her voice ringing, and her eyes opened so wide that I thought the bags underneath them must burst with a pop.

The young doctor living in the boarding-house also interested me, reviving indeed my desire to follow his own profession myself. He was about twenty-six years old and very poor; the exact antithesis of myself, being clear-minded, practical, cynical and a thorough sceptic on the existence of a soul and God and immortality. He was well-read and had the true scientific temperament, spending hours with his microscope and books. The fact of his being at the opposite pole to myself attracted me to him, and we had long talks in his consulting-room on the ground floor back—where everything was prepared for the reception of patients, but where no patient ever came. Our worlds were so far apart, and it was so hard to establish a mutual coinage of words that our talks were somewhat futile. He was logical, absorbed in his dream of original research; he used words in their exact meaning and jumped to no conclusions rashly, and never allowed his judgment to be influenced by his emotions; whereas I talked, no doubt, like a child, building vast erections upon inadequate premises, indulging in my religious dreams about God and the soul, speculative and visionary. He argued me out of my boots every time, and towards the end of our talks grew impatient and almost angry with my vague mind and "transcendental tommy-rot," as he called it; but at the same time he liked me, and was always glad to talk and discuss with me.

Nothing he said, though much of it was cogent and unanswerable, ever influenced my opinions in the least degree, because I felt he was fundamentally wrong, and was trying to find by scalpel and microscope the things of the spirit.

I felt a profound pity for him, and he felt a contemptuous pity for me. But one night my pity almost changed to love, and after this particular conversation, in the course of which he made me deep confidences of his early privations in order that he might study for his profession, and of his unquenchable desire for knowledge for its own sake, I felt so tenderly towards him, that I never tried to argue again, but only urged him to believe in a soul and in a future life. For he told me that he was already so far gone in consumption that at most he had but a year or two to live, and he knew that in the time at his disposal he could not accomplish the very smallest part of his great dream. I then understood why his eyes were so burning bright and why he had always glowing red spots in his cheeks, and looked so terribly thin and emaciated.

The hours spent with him did not refresh or invigorate me as the woods and music did; I re-entered the swing doors of my prison—as I came to regard the Hub—with no new stimulus. His example impressed me, but his atmosphere and outlook both depressed. Only my admiration for his courage, strong will, and consistent attitude remained, while I drank "tea" with my unpleasant customers, or listened to complaints from the staff. Before the swing-doors closed for the last time, however, the thin, keen-faced doctor with the hectic flush and the bright burning eyes had succumbed to his terrible malady. His end made a great impression on me. For several months he went about like a living skeleton. His cough was ghastly. He had less and less money, and I seemed to be the only friend he turned to, or indeed possessed at all, for I was the only person he allowed to help him, and the little help I could give was barely enough to prevent the landlady turning him out for rent and board unpaid.

To the last his will burned in him like a flame. He talked and studied, and dreamed his long dream of scientific achievement even when he knew his time was measured by weeks, and he was utterly scornful of death and a Deity that could devise such a poor scheme of existence, so full of failure, pain, and abortive effort. But I was full of

admiration for the way he kept going full speed to the very end, starting new books and fresh experiments even when he knew he would not have time to get half-way through with them, and discussing high schemes just as though he expected years in which to carry them out—instead of days.

Here was a man absolutely without faith, or any belief in God or future life, who walked straight up to a miserable death under full steam, with nothing to console or buoy him up, and without friends to sympathize, and who never for a single instant flinched or whimpered. There burned in his heart the fire of a really strong will. It was the first time I had realized at close quarters what this meant, and when I went to his funeral I felt full of real sorrow, and have never forgotten the scene at his death-bed when the keen set face relaxed nothing of its decision to the very last.

CHAPTER IX

AT length the bitter, sparkling winter was over, the sleigh-bells silent, the covered skating-rinks all closed. The last remnants of the piled-up snow had melted, and the sweet spring winds were blowing freshly down the cedar-paved streets. On the lake shores the boat-houses were being opened ; canoes, skiffs and cat-boats being repainted. Tents and camping kit were being overhauled. The talk everywhere was of picnics, expeditions, trips into the backwoods, and plans for summer holidays. Crystal sunlight flooded the world. The Canadian spring intoxicated the brain and sent the blood dancing to wild, happy measures.

The Hub was now in the hands of a Receiver ; Adams and Burns, the wholesale house, controlled it. Kay and I had to pay cash for everything—the Hub Wine Company was "bust."

Yielding to my father's impatient surprise that after all these months I was still a partner, I had assigned my interest a short time before to Kay, and had sent home the printed announcement in the newspapers. It was a nominal assignment only, for I had nothing to assign. My last penny of capital was lost. Kay, for his part, had lost everything too. Vultures, in the form of bailiffs with blue writs in their claws, haunted our last week ; by good luck rather than good management I owed nothing, but Kay had small outstanding accounts all over the town.

It was a hectic last week. Our friends came in crowds to sympathize, to offer advice, to suggest new plans, and all considered a liquid farewell necessary. This etiquette was strict. A private word with the Receiver brought back our tea bottle. The Upper House did a fair business again, while Louis B—— bursting with new schemes,

new enterprises, that should restore our fortunes, was for ever at the piano in the upstairs room. We played together while our little Rome was burning—Tchaikowsky, Chopin, Wagner, and the latest songs with choruses. Kay donned his Irving wig from time to time and roared his "Bells" and "Suicide." Our last days rattled by.

The pain of the failure was mitigated for me personally by the intense relief I felt to be free of the nightmare at last. Whatever might be in store, nothing could be worse than that six months' horror. Besides, failure in Canada was never final. It held the seeds of success to follow. From its ashes new life rose with wings and singing. The electric air of spring encouraged brave hopes of a thousand possibilities, and while I felt the disaster overwhelmingly, our brains at the same time already hummed with every imaginable fresh scheme. What these schemes were it is difficult now to recall, beyond that they included all possibilities of enterprise that a vast young country could suggest to penniless adventurous youth.

What memory still holds sharply, however, is the face of a young lawyer of our acquaintance, as he looked at me across the fiddle and said casually: "You can live on my island in Lake Rosseau if you like!" Without a moment's hesitation we accepted the lawyer's offer of his ten-acre island in the northern lakes. The idea of immediate new enterprise faded. Kay was easily persuaded into a plan that promised a few weeks' pleasant leisure to think things over, living meanwhile for next to nothing. "I shall go to New York later," he announced, "and get on the stage. I'll take Shakespeare up to the island and study it." He packed his Irving wig. It was the camping-out which caught me with irresistible attraction: the big woods, an open air life, sun, wind and water. . . . "I'll come up and join you later," promised the sanguine Louis B——. "I'll come with some new plan we can talk over round your camp-fire." He agreed to pack up our few belongings and keep them for us till we went later to New York. "We'll all go to the States,"

he urged. "Canada is a one-horse place. There are far more chances across the line."

We kept secret our date of leaving, only Louis knowing it. On the morning of May 24th, the Queen's birthday, he came to fetch us and our luggage, the latter reduced to a minimum. There were no good-byes. But this excitable little Frenchman, who loved a touch of the picturesque, did not come quite as we expected. He arrived two hours before his time, with a wagonette and two prancing horses, his fat figure on the box, flicking his long whip and shouting up at our windows. His idea, he explained as we climbed in, was to avoid the main station, where we should be bound to see a dozen people we knew. He proposed, instead, to drive us twenty miles to a small station, where the train stopped on its way north. There was no time to argue. I sat beside him on the box with the precious fiddle, Kay got behind with our two bags, and Louis drove us and his spanking pair along King Street and then up Yonge Street. Scores recognized us, wondering what it meant, for these were the principal streets of the town, but Louis flourished his whip, gave the horses their head, and raced along the interminable Yonge Street till at length the houses disappeared, and the empty reaches of the hinterland took their place. He saw us into the train with our luggage and our few dollars, waving his whip in farewell as the engine started. We did not see him again till he arrived, thin, worried, anxious and gabbling, in the East 19th Street boarding-house the following autumn.

My Toronto episodes were over. I had been eighteen months in the country and was close upon twenty-two; my capital I had lost, but I had gained at least a little experience in exchange. I no longer trusted every one at sight. The green paint had worn thin in patches, if not all over. The collapse of the Dairy made me feel old, the Hub disaster made me a Methuselah. My home life seemed more and more remote, I had broken with it finally, I could never return to the old country, nor show my face in the family circle again. Thus I felt, at least. The pain and unhappiness in me seemed incurably deep, and

my shame was very real. In my heart was a secret wish to live in the backwoods for evermore, a broken man, feeding on lost illusions and vanished dreams. The light-hearted plans that Louis B—— and Kay so airily discussed I could not understand. My heart sank each time I recognized my father's handwriting on an envelope. I felt a kind of final misery that only my belief in Karma mitigated.

This mood of exaggerated intensity soon passed, of course, but for a time life was very bitter. It was hard at first to "accept" these fruits of former lives, this harvest of misfortune whose seeds I assuredly had sown myself long, long ago. The "detachment" I was trying to learn, with its attitude of somehow being "indifferent to the fruits of action," was not acquired in a day.

Yet it interests me now to look back down the vista of thirty years, and to realize that this first test of my line of thought—whether it was a pretty fancy merely, or whether a real conviction—did not find me wanting. It was, I found, a genuine belief; neither then, nor in the severer tests that followed, did it ever fail me for a single moment. I understood, similarly, how my father's faith, equally sincere though in such different guise to mine, could give him strength and comfort, no matter what life might bring. . . .

As our train went northwards through the hinterland towards Gravenhurst and the enchanted island where we were to spend five months of a fairyland existence, I grasped that a chapter of my life was closed, and a new one opening. The mind looked back, of course. Toronto, whose Indian name means Place of Meeting, I saw only once or twice again. I never stayed there. At the end of our happy island-life, we rushed through it on our way to fresh adventures in New York, Kay hiding his face in an overcoat lest some creditor catch a glimpse of him and serve a blue writ before the train's few minutes' pause in the station ended. The following winter, indeed, this happened, though in a theatre and not in a railway carriage. The travelling company, of which he formed

a member, was giving its Toronto week, and a creditor in the audience recognized him on the stage, though not this time in his Irving wig. The blue writ was served, the bailiff standing in the wings until the amount was paid.

In the mood of reflection a train journey engenders, a sense of perspective slipped behind the eighteen months just over. Shot forth from my evangelical hot-house into colonial life, it now seemed to me rather wonderful that my utter ignorance had not landed me in yet worse muddles . . . even in gaol. . . . One incident, oddly enough, stood out more clearly than the rest. But for my ridiculous inexperience of the common conditions of living, my complete want of *savoir faire*, my unacquaintance even with the ways of normal social behaviour, I might have now been in very different circumstances. A quite different career might easily have opened for me, a career in a railway, in the Canadian Pacific Railway, in fact, on one of whose trains we were then travelling.

But for my stupid ignorance, an opening in the C.P.R. would certainly have been found for me, whether it led to a future or not. The incident, slight and trivial though it was, throws a characteristic light on the results of my upbringing. It happened in this way:

Among my father's acquaintance were the bigwigs of the Canadian Pacific Railway, who had shown him much courtesy on our earlier visit. The relationship this time was not of a religious kind; he was Financial Secretary to the Post Office; the C.P.R. carried the mails. Sir George Stephen and Sir Donald Stewart had not at that time received their peerages as My Lords Mount-Stephen and Strathcona; Sir William van Horne was still alive. To all of these I bore letters, though I delivered—by post to Montreal—only the one to Sir George, as President of the line. It met with the kindest possible response, and for several weeks I had been awaiting the return of T., an important official in Toronto, to whom my case had been explained, but who was away at the time, touring the west in his special car. The moment I returned, I felt reasonably sure that he would find me a place of some

sort or other where I could at least make a start. He had, in fact, been asked to do so. With influence, too, in high quarters behind me, I had every reason to hope. The return of Mr. T. I awaited eagerly. He was a young man, I learned, of undoubted ability, but was at the same time a petty fellow, very pushing, very conceited, and a social snob of the most flagrant type. I was rather frightened, indeed, by what I heard, for a colonial social snob can be a very terrible creature, as I had already discovered.

Mr. T.'s return chanced to coincide with a big race meeting, to be followed by a ball at Government House. Sir Alexander Campbell was Governor of Ontario at the time. It was the event of the season, and of course Mr. T. came back in time to attend it and be in evidence. With a party of friends I drove to my first race meeting (oh, how the clothes, the talk, the rushing horses, all looking exactly alike, bored me!) with an invitation to the grand stand box of the Governor General, Lord Aberdeen, also a friend of my father's, and was thus introduced to the railway official under the best possible auspices. My heart beat high when I saw how he took trouble to be nice to me and begged me to call upon him next day at his office, saying that "something could no doubt be arranged for me *at once*." I was so delighted that I felt inclined to cable home at once "Got work"; but I resisted this temptation and simply let my imagination play round the nature of the position I should soon be holding in a very big company, with excellent chances of promotion and salary. I was too young to be bothered by the man's patronizing manner and did not care a straw about his condescension and self-importance, because I thought only of getting work and a start.

The ball filled me with intense shyness and alarm, however, for I had never learned to dance, or been inside a ballroom, and it was merely by chance I found out that white gloves and a white tie (not a black one as I had always worn at home for dinner) were the proper things. In a colony, too, an Englishman, who pretends to any

standing, cannot be too careful about social details; for everything, and more besides, is expected of him.

The ball was even worse than I had anticipated. I was nervous and uncomfortable. Ignorant of the little observances that would have been known to any man brought up differently, I found nothing to say to the numerous pretty Canadian girls, unconventional and natural, who were introduced to me, and I had not the slightest idea that the correct and polite thing to do was to ask each young lady for the "pleasure of a dance."

What people must have thought of my manners I cannot imagine, but the climax was undoubtedly reached when the railway official swaggered up to me in the middle of the room and said he wished to introduce me to his sister. This was duly accomplished, but—I could think of nothing to say. We stood side by side, with the official beaming upon us, I fingering my empty programme and the girl waiting to be asked for a dance. But the request was not forthcoming, and after a few minutes of terrible awkwardness and half silence, the purple-faced official marched his sister off again, highly insulted, to introduce her to men who would appreciate their luck better than I had done.

To him, of course, my manners must have seemed hopelessly rude. He felt angry that I had not thought his sister worth even the ordinary politeness of a dance; and to a Canadian, who learns dancing with his bottle, and dances indoors and out on every possible occasion, the omission must have seemed incredibly ill-mannered, and the snub an unforgivable one. I cannot blame him. I remained in complete ignorance however of my crime, and, beyond feeling nervously foolish, out of place, and generally not much of a success, I had no idea I had given cause for offence until, long afterwards, I heard stories about myself and my behaviour which made me realize that I had done unpardonable things and left undone all that was best and correct.

At the time, however, I had no realization that I had offended at all; and in the morning I went down accord-

ing to appointment to call upon the railway official in his fine offices and hear the joyful news of my appointment to a lucrative and honourable position in the Company.

It seemed a little strange to me that I was kept waiting exactly an hour in the outer office, but I was so sure of a pleasant interview with a practical result that when at last the clerk summoned me to the official's sanctum, I went in with a smiling face and goodwill and happiness in my heart.

The general manager, as I will call him, though this title disguises his actual position, greeted me, however, without a word. He was talking to a man who stood beside his desk, and though he must have heard my name announced, he did not so much as turn his head. I stood looking at the framed photographs on the wall for several moments before the man went out, and then, when the door was closed, I advanced with outstretched hand and cordial manner across the room to greet my future employer.

He glanced at me frigidly, and, without even rising from his chair, gave me a stiff bow and said in a voice of the utmost formality:

"Well, sir, and what can I do for you?"

The words fell into my brain like so many particles of ice, and froze my tongue. Such a reception I had never dreamed of receiving. What had I done wrong? How in the world had I offended? Not even a word of apology for keeping me waiting an hour; and not even a seat offered me. I stood there foolishly for a moment, completely puzzled. Surely there must be a mistake. The man had forgotten me, or took me for somebody else.

"I had an appointment with you at eleven o'clock, Mr. T.," I said nervously, but trying to smile pleasantly. "You remember you were kind enough to say yesterday you thought you might find work for me to do in—in the railway offices."

The man's eyes flashed, just as though he were angry, his face turned red, and I could not help suddenly noticing

what a bad, weak chin he had and how common and coarse the lines of his face were. The flush seemed to emphasize all its bad points.

"Oh, you want work?" he said with a distinct sneer, looking me up and down as if I were an animal to be judged. "You want work, do you?"

My nervousness began to melt away before his offensive manner, and I felt the blood mounting, but trying to keep my temper and to believe still there must be some mistake, I again reminded him of our previous interview at the races and in the ballroom.

"Oh, to be sure, yes, now I remember," he said casually, and turned to take up pencil and paper on his desk. I looked about for a chair, but there was none near, so I remained standing, feeling something like a suspected man about to be examined by a magistrate.

"What can you do?" he asked abruptly.

"Well," I stammered, utterly surprised at his rudeness and manner, "I've not had much experience yet, of course, but I'm willing to begin at the bottom and work up. I'll do anything for a beginning."

"That's what everyone says. 'Doing anything' is no good to me. I want to know what you *can* do. All my clerks here write shorthand——"

"I can write shorthand accurately and fast," I hastened to interrupt, evidently to his surprise, as though he had not expected to find me thus equipped.

"But at present," he hastened to add, "there are no vacancies on my staff, and I fear I can offer you nothing unless——" he hesitated a moment and then looked me full in the face. This time there could be no mistake. I saw blood in his eye and I realized he was savagely angry with me for some reason, and was determined to make the interview as unpleasant for me as possible.

"——unless you care to sling baggage on a side station up the line," he finished sneeringly.

The blood rushed to my face, and I understood in a flash that the interview was a farce and his only object to humiliate me. I had so far swallowed my temper on

the chance of getting a position, but I knew that a post under such a man, who evidently hated me, would be worse than nothing. So I gave him one look from head to foot and turned to leave the room. I could have struck him in the jaw with the greatest pleasure in the world.

"Then I understand you have no vacancies," I said quietly as soon as I got to the door. "I will write and thank Sir George Stephen and tell him about your kindness to me."

I said this because it was the only thing that occurred to me to say, and not with the object of making him uncomfortable. I had no intention of putting my words into effect, I had no idea my stray shot would hit the mark.

Yet it did. The official, purple, and dismayed, got up hastily, and called me to stay a moment and he would see if something was not possible. Hurried sentences followed me to the passage, but I merely bowed and went out, knowing perfectly well that nothing could come of further conversation.

CHAPTER X

GRADUALLY, thus, contact with ordinary people and experiences with certain facets, at least, of practical life had begun to give me what is called a knowledge of the world. The hot-house upbringing made this acquisition difficult as well as painful; there still remained a feeling that I was "peculiar"; ignorance of things that to other youths of twenty-one were commonplaces still gave me little shocks. Knowledge that comes at the wrong time is apt to produce exaggerated effects; and only those who have shared the childlike shelter afforded by a strict evangelical enclosure in early years can appreciate the absurd want of proportion which is one of these effects. Knowledge of "natural" human kinds, withheld at the right moment, and acquired later, has its dangers. . . .

Two things, moreover, about people astonished me in particular, I remember; they astonish me even more today. Being, in both cases, merely individual reactions, to the herd, they are easily understandable, and are mentioned here because, being entirely personal, they reveal the individual whose adventures are described.

The first—it astonished me daily, hourly—was the indifference of almost everybody to the great questions Whence, Why, Whither. The few who asked these questions seemed cranks of one sort or another; the immense majority of people showed no interest whatever. Creatures of extraordinary complexity, powers, faculties, set down for a given period, without being consulted apparently, upon a little planet amid countless numbers of majestic, terrifying suns . . . few showed even the faintest interest in the purpose, origin and goal of their existence. Of these few, again, by far the majority were eager to prove that soul and spirit were chemical reactions,

results of some fortuitous concourse of dead atoms, to rob life, in a word, of all its wonder. These problems of paramount, if insoluble, interest, were taken as a matter of course. There was, indeed, no sense of wonder.

It astonished me, doubtless, because in my own case this was the only kind of knowledge I desired, and desired passionately. To me it was the only real knowledge, the only thing worth knowing. . . . And I was ever getting little shocks on discovering gradually that not only was such knowledge not wanted, but that to talk of its possibility constituted one a dreamer, if not a bore. How anybody in possession of ordinary faculties could look, say, at the night sky of stars, and not know the wondrous flood of divine curiosity about his own personal relation to the universe drench his being—this never ceased to perplex me. Yet with almost everybody, the few exceptions being usually "odd," conversation rapidly flattened out as though such things were of no importance, while stocks and shares, some kind of practical "market-value," at any rate, quickly became again the topic of real value. Not only, however, did this puzzle me; it emphasized at this time one's sense of being peculiar; it sketched a growing loneliness in more definite outline. No one wanted to make some money more than I did, but these other things —one reason, doubtless, why I never did make money —came indubitably first.

The second big and daily astonishment of those awakening years, which also has persisted, if not actually intensified, concerned the blank irresponsiveness to beauty of almost everybody I had to do with. Exceptions, again, were either cranks or useless, unpractical people, failures to a man. Many liked "scenery," either perceiving it for themselves, or on having it pointed out to them; but very few, as with myself, knew their dominant mood of the day influenced—well, by a gleam of light upon the lake at dawn, a faint sound of music in the pines, a sudden strip of blue on a day of storm, the great piled coloured clouds at evening—"such clouds as flit, like splendour-winged moths about a taper, round the red west when the sun dies

in it." These things had an effect of intoxication upon me, for it was the wonder and beauty of Nature that touched me most; something like the delight of ecstasy swept over me when I read of sunrise in the Indian Caucasus. . . . "The point of one white star is quivering still, deep in the orange light of widening morn beyond the purple mountains . . ." and it was a genuine astonishment to me that so few, so very few, felt the slightest response, or even noticed, a thousand and one details in sky and earth that delighted me with haunting joy for hours at a stretch.

With Kay, my late "partner in booze," as I had heard him called, there was sufficient response in these two particulars to make him a sympathetic companion. If these things were not of dominant importance to him, they were at least important. Humour and courage being likewise his, he proved a delightful comrade during our five months of lonely island life. What his view of myself may have been is hard to say; luckily perhaps, Kay was not a scribbler. . . . He will agree, I think, that we were certainly very happy in our fairyland of peace and loveliness amid the Muskoka Lakes of Northern Ontario.

Our island, one of many in Lake Rosseau, was about ten acres in extent, irregularly shaped, overgrown with pines, its western end running out to a sharp ridge we called Sunset Point, its eastern end facing the dawn in a high rocky bluff. It rose in the centre to perhaps a hundred feet, it had little secret bays, pools of deep water beneath the rocky bluff for high diving, sandy nooks, and a sheltered cove where a boat could ride at anchor in all weathers. Close to the shore, but hidden by the pines, was a one-roomed hut with two camp-beds, a big table, a wide balcony, and a tiny kitchen in a shack adjoining. A canoe and rowing-boat went with the island, a diminutive wharf as well. On the mainland, a mile and a half to the north, was an English settler named Woods who had cleared the forest some twenty-five years before, and turned the wilderness into a more or less productive farm. Milk, eggs

and vegetables we obtained from time to time. To the south and east and west lay open water for several miles, dotted by similar islands with summer camps and bungalows on them. The three big lakes—Rosseau, Muskoka and Joseph—form the letter Y, our island being where the three strokes joined.

To me it was paradise, the nearest approach to a dream come true I had yet known. The climate was dry, sunny and bracing, the air clear as crystal, the nights cool. In moonlight the islands seemed to float upon the water, and when there was no moon the reflection of the stars had an effect of phosphorescence in some southern sea. Dawns and sunsets, too, were a constant delight, and before we left in late September we had watched through half the night the strange spectacle of the Northern Lights in all their rather awful splendour.

The day we arrived—May 24th—a Scotch mist veiled all distant views, the island had a lonely and deserted air, a touch of melancholy about its sombre pines; and when the small steamer had deposited us with our luggage on the slippery wharf and vanished into the mist, I remember Kay's disconsolate expression as he remarked gravely: "We shan't stay *here* long!" Our first supper deepened his conviction, for, though there were lamps, we had forgotten to bring oil, and we devoured bread and porridge quickly before night set in. It was certainly a contrast to the brilliantly lit corner of the Hub dining-room where we had eaten our last dinner. . . . But the following morning at six o'clock, after a bathe in the cool blue water, while a dazzling sun shone in a cloudless sky, he had already changed his mind. Our immediate past seemed hardly credible now. Jimmy Martin, the "Duke," the Methodist woodcuts, the life insurance offices, to say nothing of the sporting goods emporium, red-bearded bailiffs, Alfred Cooper, and a furious half-intoxicated Irish cook—all faded into the atmosphere of some half-forgotten, ugly dream.

We at once set our house in order. We had saved a small sum in cash from the general wreck; a little went a

long way; pickerel were to be caught for the trouble of trolling a spoon-bait round the coast, and we soon discovered where the black bass hid under rocky ledges of certain pools. In a few weeks, too, we had learned to manage a canoe to the point of upsetting it far from shore, shaking it half-empty while treading water, then climbing in again—the point where safety, according to the Canadians, is attained. Even in these big lakes, it was rare that the water was too rough for going out, once the craft was mastered; a "Rice Lake" or "Peterborough," as they were called, could face anything; a turn of the wrist could "lift" them; they answered the paddle like a living thing; a chief secret of control being that the kneeling occupant should feel himself actually a part of his canoe. This trifling knowledge, gained during our idle holiday, came in useful years later when taking a canoe down the Danube, from its source in the Black Forest, to Budapest.

Time certainly never hung heavy on our hands. Before July, when the Canadians came up to their summer camps, we had explored every bay and inlet of the lakes, had camped out on many an enchanted island, and had made longer expeditions of several days at a time into the great region of backwoods that began due north. These trips, westward to Georgian Bay with its thousand islands, on Lake Huron, or northward beyond French River, where the primeval backwoods begin their unbroken stretch to James Bay and the Arctic, were a source of keen joy. Our cooking was perhaps primitive, but we kept well on it. With books, a fiddle, expeditions, to say nothing of laundry and commissariat work, the days passed rapidly. Kay was very busy, too, "preparing for the stage," as he called it, and Shakespeare was always in his hand or pocket. The eastern end of the island was reserved for these rehearsals, while the Sunset Point end was my especial part, and while I was practising the fiddle or deep in my Eastern books, Kay, at the other point of the island, high on his rocky bluff, could be heard sometimes booming "The world is out of joint. Oh cursed fate that

I was born to set it right," and I was convinced that he wore his Irving wig, no matter what lines he spouted. In the evenings, as we lay after supper at Sunset Point, watching the colours fade and the stars appear, it was the exception if he did not murmur to himself ". . . the stars came out, over that summer sea," and then declaim in his great voice the whole of "The *Revenge*" which ends "I, Sir Richard Grenville, die!"—his tall figure silhouetted against the sunset, his voice echoing among the pines behind him.

Considerations for the future were deliberately shelved; we lived in the present, as wise men should; New York, we knew, lay waiting for us, but we agreed to let it wait. My father's suggestion—"your right course is to return to Toronto, find work, and live down your past"—was a counsel of perfection I disregarded. New York, the busy, strenuous, go-ahead United States, offered the irresistible lure of a promised land, and we both meant to try our fortunes there. How we should reach it, or what we should do when we did reach it, were problems whose solution was postponed.

On looking back I can only marvel at the patience with which neither tired of the other. Perhaps it was perfect health that made squabbles so impossible. Nor was there any hint of monotony, strange to say. We had many an escape, upsetting in wild weather, losing our way in the trackless forests of the mainland, climbing or felling trees, but some Pan-like deity looked after us. . . . The spirit of Shelley, of course, haunted me day and night; "Prometheus Unbound," pages of which I knew by heart, lit earth and sky, peopled the forests, turned stream and lake alive, and made every glade and sandy bay a floor for dancing silvery feet: "Oh, follow, follow, through the caverns hollow; As the song floats thou pursue, Where the wild bee never flew. . . ." I still hear Kay's heavy voice, a little out of tune, singing to my fiddle the melody I made for it. And how he used to laugh! Always at himself, but also at and with most other things, an infectious, jolly wholesome laughter, inspired by details

of our care-free island life, from his beard and Shakespeare rehearsals to my own whiskers and uncut hair, my Shelley moods and my intense Yoga experiments. . . .

Much of the charm of our lonely life vanished when, with high summer, the people came up to their camps and houses on the other islands. The solitude was then disturbed by canoes, sailing-boats, steam-launches; singing and shouting broke the deep silences; camp-fires in a dozen directions blazed at night. Many of these people we had known well in Toronto, but no one called on us. Sometimes we would paddle to some distant camp-fire, lying on the water just outside the circle of light, and recognizing acquaintances, even former customers of Hub and Dairy and the Sporting Goods Emporium, but never letting ourselves be seen. Everybody knew we were living on the island; yet avoidance was mutual. We were in disgrace, it seemed, and chiefly because of the Hub—not because of our conduct with regard to it, but, apparently, because we had left the town suddenly without saying good-bye to all and sundry. This abrupt disappearance had argued something wrong, something we were ashamed of. All manner of wild tales reached us, most of them astonishingly remote from the truth.

This capacity for invention and imaginative detail of most ingenious sort, using the tiniest insignificant item of truth as starting point, suggests that even the dullest people must have high artistic faculties tucked away somewhere in them. Many of these tales we traced to their source—usually a person the world considered devoid of fancy, even dull. Here, evidently, possessing genuine creative power, were unpublished novelists with distinct gifts of romance and fantasy who had missed their real vocation. The truth about us was, indeed, far from glorious, but these wild tales made us feel almost supermen. Many years later I met other instances of this power that dull, even stupid people could keep carefully hidden till the right opportunity for production offers—I was credited, to name the best, with superhuman powers of Black Magic, whatever that may be, and of sorcery. It was soon after

a book of mine, "John Silence," had appeared. A story reached my ears, the name of its author boldly given, to the effect that, for the purposes of this Black Magic, I had stolen the vases from the communion altar of St. Paul's Cathedral and used their consecrated content in some terrible orgy called the Black Mass. Young children, too, were somehow involved in this ceremony of sacrilegious sorcery, and I was going to be arrested. The author of this novelette was well known to me, connected even by blood ties, a person I had always conceived to be without the faintest of imaginative gifts, though a credulous reader, evidently, of the mediæval tales concerning the monstrous Gilles de Rais. Absurd as it sounds, a solicitor's letter was necessary finally to limit the author's prolific output, although pirated editions continued to sell for a considerable time. There is a poet hidden, as Stevenson observed, in most of us!

Meanwhile, summer began to wane; we considered plans for attacking New York; hope rose strongly in us both; disappointments and failures were forgotten. In so big a city we were certain to find work. We had a hundred dollars laid aside for the journey and to tide us over the first few days until employment came. We could not hide for ever in fairyland. Life called to us. . . . Late in September, just when the lakes were beginning to recover their first solitude again, we packed up to leave. Though the sun was still hot at midday, the mornings and evenings were chill, and cold winds had begun to blow. The famous fall colouring had set fire to the woods; the sumach blazed a gorgeous red, the maples were crimson and gold, half of the mainland seemed in flame. Sorrowfully, yet with eager anticipation in our hearts, we poured water on our camp-fire that had served us for five months without relighting, locked the door of the shanty, handed over to Woods the canoe and boat, and caught the little steamer on one of its last trips to Gravenhurst where the train would take us, *via* Toronto, to New York.

It had been a delightful experience; I had seen and known at last the primeval woods; I had even seen Red

Indians by the dozen in their pathetic Reservations, and if they did not, like the spirit of the Medicine Man in Edinburgh, advise me to "scratch," they certainly made up for the omission by constantly scratching themselves. It seems curious to me now that, during those months of happy leisure, the desire to write never once declared itself. It never occurred to me to write even a description of our picturesque way of living, much less to attempt an essay or a story. Nor did plans for finding work in New York—we discussed them by the score—include in their wonderful variety any suggestion of a pen and paper. At the age of twenty-two, literary ambition did not exist at all.

The Muskoka interlude remained for me a sparkling, radiant memory, alight with the sunshine of unclouded skies, with the gleam of stars in a blue-black heaven, swept by forest winds, and set against a background of primeval forests that stretched without a break for six hundred miles of lonely and untrodden beauty.

CHAPTER XI

KAY and I arrived in New York on a crisp, sunny afternoon with sixty dollars in hand out of the original hundred set by for the purpose, and took a room in the Imperial Hotel, Broadway, which someone had recommended. We knew no one, had no letters of introduction. We were tanned the colour of Red Indians, in perfect physical condition, but with a very scanty wardrobe.

The furious turmoil of the noisy city, boiling with irrepressible energies, formed an odd contrast to the peace and stillness of the forests. There was indifference in both cases, but whereas there it was tolerant and kindly, here it seemed intolerant and aggressive. "Get a hustle on, or get out," was the note. Nature welcomed, while human nature resented, the intrusion of two new atoms. Nostalgia for the woods swept over me vehemently, but at the same time an eager anticipation to get work. We studied the papers at once for rooms, choosing a boarding house in East 19th Street, between Broadway and 4th Avenue. Something in the wording caught us. An hour after our arrival we interviewed Mrs. Bernstein and engaged the third floor back, breakfast included, for eight dollars a week. It was cheap. The slovenly, emotional, fat Jewess, with her greasy locks, jewellery, and tawdry finery, had something motherly about her that appealed. She smiled. She did not ask for payment in advance.

"What's your work," she inquired, gazing up at me.

"Oh, I'm going on the newspapers," I said offhand, taking the first idea that offered, but little dreaming it was to prove true.

"I shall be on the stage," Kay promptly added, "as soon as my arrangements are made."

Mrs. Bernstein smiled. She knew the power of the

Press and favoured reporters. "My hospand," she informed Kay sympathetically, "is an artist too, a moosician. He has his own orghestra."

While Kay studied the theatrical papers, I took the elevated railway down-town. I wanted to stand on Brooklyn Bridge again. Since first seeing it with my father a few years before, and again on my arrival eighteen months ago, *en route* for Toronto, the place had held my imagination. Something sentimental lay in this third journey, for I wanted to go alone.

Halfway across, at the highest point, I stood looking down upon the great waterway between the two cities of the new world, and the feeling of a fresh chapter in life, with its inevitable comparisons, rose in me. . . . The sun was sinking behind the hills of New Jersey, and the crowded bay lay a sheet of golden shimmer. Huge, double-ended ferry boats, plying between the wooded shores of Staten and Manhattan Islands and Brooklyn, rushed to and fro with great snortings and hootings; little tugs dashed in every direction with vast importance; sail-boats, yachts, schooners and cat-boats dotted the water like a thousand living things; and threading majestically through them all steamed one or two impressive Atlantic liners, immense and castle-like, towering above all else, as they moved slowly out toward the open sea. The deep poetry which ever frames the most prosaic things, lending them their real significance, came over me with the wind from that open sea.

I stood watching the fading lights beyond the bay, while behind me the crowded trains, at the rate of one a minute, passed thundering across the bridge, and thousands upon thousands of tired workers thronged to their Brooklyn homes after their day in the bigger city. The great bridge swayed and throbbed as the dense masses of pedestrians climbed uphill to the centre, then swarmed in a thick black river down the nether slope. I had never seen such numbers, or such speed of nervous movement, and the eager, tense faces, usually strained, white, drawn as well, touched an unpleasant note. New York, I felt, was not to be trifled

with; the human element was strenuously keen; no loafing or dreaming here: work to the last ounce, or the city would make cat's meat of one! Whereupon, by contrast, stole back again the deep enchantment of the silent woods, and the longing for the great, still places rose; I saw our little island floating beneath glittering stars: a loon was laughing farther out; the Northern Lights went flashing to mid-heaven; there was a sound of wind among the pines. The huge structure that reared above me seemed unreal; the river of men and women slipped past like silent shadows: the trains and boats became remote and hushed; and the ugly outer world about me merged in the substance of a dream and was forgotten. . . .

I turned and looked out over New York. I saw its lofty spires, its massed buildings, gigantic in the sky; I saw the opening of the great Hudson River, and the darkening water of the bay; I heard, like a sinister multiple voice out of the future, the strident cry of this wonderful and terrible capital of the New World, and the deep pulsings of its engines of frantic haste and untiring energy. The general note, I remember, was alarming rather; a touch of loneliness, of my own stupid incompetence to deal with its aggressive spirit, in which gleamed something merciless, almost cruel—this was the response it stirred in me. I suddenly realized I had no trade, no talents to sell, no weapons with which to fight. My heart sank a little. Among these teeming millions, with their tearing speed, their frenzied energy, their appalling practical knowledge, I possessed but one friend, Kay, and some sixty dollars between us. New York would eat me up unless I "got a hustle on."

Next morning, our capital much reduced, we moved into the lodging house. The idea of sharing a bed, in view of our size and the narrowness of the bed, amused us, but without enthusiasm. The sofa was too small to sleep on. "We'll move," announced Kay, "as soon as we get jobs." A telegram was sent to Toronto giving our address, and a few days later a packing case arrived with our Toronto possessions, and ten dollars to pay out of our

small total. We found close at hand, in 20th Street, a cheap clean German restaurant—Krisch's—where a meal of sorts could be had for 30 cents, tip 5 cents; it had a sanded floor and was half *bier-stube*, and one of its smiling waiters, Otto—he came from the Black Forest where I had been to school—proved a true friend later, allowing us occasional credit at his own risk; a Chinese laundry was looked up in Fourth Avenue; I spent one of our precious dollars in a small store of fiddle strings against a possible evil day—a string meant more to me than a steak—and we were then ready for our campaign.

Not a minute was lost. Kay, in very sanguine mood, the Irving wig, I shrewdly suspected, in his pocket, went out to interview managers; while I took a train down-town to interview Harper's, as being the most important publishing house I knew. This step was the result of many discussions with Kay, who said he was sure I could write. The Red Indian advice of the Edinburgh "spirit" had impressed him. "That's your line," he assured me. "Try the magazines." I felt no similar assurance, no desire to write was in me; we had worked ourselves up to a conviction that bold, immediate action was the first essential of our position; to get pupils for my two languages or shorthand seemed impossible in a city like New York; therefore I hurried down, with vague intentions but a high heart, to Harper's.

There was the *Magazine*, the *Weekly*, and *Harper's Young People*. One of them surely would listen to my tale. I chose the *Weekly* for some unknown reason. For some equally unknown reason I was admitted to the editor's sanctum, and, still more strange, Richard Harding Davis listened to my tale. His success as a novelist had just begun; he had left the *Evening Sun*, where his "Van Bibber" stories had made him first known; his popularity was rising fast, though I had never heard of him.

My tale was brief, having been rehearsed in the train. It took, perhaps, three minutes at most to rattle it off—my parentage, my farm and hotel, my interest in Eastern Thought, my present destitution, and I remember adding,

"You see, I cannot possibly go home to England again until I have made good somehow."

"Have you written anything?" he asked, after listening patiently with raised eyebrows.

"Well—no, I haven't, not yet, I'm afraid." I explained that I wanted to begin, though what I really wanted was only paid employment.

The author of "Van Bibber" and "A Soldier of Fortune" looked me up and down and then chuckled. After a moment's silence, he got up, led me across the hall to another door, opened it without knocking and said to a man who was seated at a table smothered in papers:

"This is Mr. Blackwood, an Englishman, who wants to write something for you. He is prepared to write anything—from Eastern philosophy to 'How to run a hotel in Canada.'"

The door closed behind me, with no word of farewell, and I learned that the man facing me was the editor of *Harper's Young People*. His name, if I remember rightly, was Storey, and he was an Englishman, who, curiously enough, almost at once mentioned my father. He had been an employé of the G.P.O. in London. He was unpleasant, supercilious, patronizing and off-hand, proud of his editorial power. He gave me, however, my first assignment—to write a short, descriptive article about a cargo of wild animals that had just arrived for the New York "Zoo." I hurried off to the steamer, bought some paper, wrote the article in a pew of Trinity Church in Lower Broadway, and returned three hours later to submit it. Storey read it and said without enthusiasm it would do, but when I asked "Is it good?" he shook his head with the comment "Well—some men would have made more of it perhaps." It was printed, however, and in due course I got ten dollars for it. I inquired if I could do something else. He took my address. No further results followed. Evidently, I realized, writing was not my line, and both Kay and the Red Indian Medicine Man were mistaken.

Kay's report of his luck, when we met again that evening was meagre; he had met an English Shakespearean actor, Bob Mantell, and a Toronto acquaintance, the "Duke." The actor, however, had given him an introduction or two, and the Duke had asked us to play next day in a cricket match on Staten Island. It was an eleven of Actors *v.* the Staten Island Club, and Kay would meet useful people. In sanguine mood we agreed to go. It proved a momentous match for me.

Before it came off, however, something else had happened that may seem very small beer, but that provided me with a recurrent horror for many months to come, a horror perhaps disproportionate to its cause. It filled me, at any rate, with a peculiar loathing as of some hideous nightmare. I had never seen the things before; their shape, their ungainly yet rapid movement, their uncanny power of disappearing in a second, their number, their dirty colour, above all their smell, now gave me the sensations of acute nausea. Kay's laughter, though he too felt disgust and indignation, brought no comfort. We eventually got up and lit the gas. We caught it. I had my first view of the beast. We stared at each other in horror. Then Kay sniffed the air. "That explains it," he said, referring to a faint odour of oil we had both noticed when engaging the room. "They put it in the woodwork to kill them," he added. "It's the only thing. But it never really gets rid of them, I'm afraid."

The anger of Mrs. Bernstein when we accused her in the morning, her indignant denials, her bluster about "insoults," and that "never had sooch a t'ing been said of her house pefore," were not half as comic as her expression when I suddenly produced the soap-dish with its damning evidence—17 all told.

She stared, held her breath a second, then very quietly said "Ach, Ach! If you stay, chentelmen, I take von tollar off the price."

It was impossible not to laugh with her; there was something kind and motherly, something good and honest and decent about her we both liked; she would do her best,

we believed; possibly she really would exterminate the other tenants. We stayed on.

Of the cricket match on Staten Island, beyond the pretty ground with its big trees, and that we got a good lunch without paying for it, no memory remains. What stands out vividly is the tall figure of Arthur Glyn Boyde, a fast bowler and a good bat, and one of the most entertaining and sympathetic companions I had ever met. His clothes were shabby, but his graceful manners, his voice, his smile, everything about him, in fact, betrayed the English gentleman. He was about thirty years of age, of the most frank and engaging appearance, with kindly, honest blue eyes, in one of which he wore an eyeglass. I remember the little fact that he, Kay and myself were measured for a bet after the match, and that he, like Kay, was six feet two inches, being one inch shorter than myself.

I took to him at once, and he to me. His real name was a distinguished one which he shared, it turned out, with some cousins of my own. We were, therefore, related. The bond was deepened. Times had gone hard with him, it seemed, but at the moment he was on the stage, being understudy to Morton Selton as Merivale in "Captain Lettarblair," which E. H. Sothern's company was then playing. In "The Disreputable Mr. Reagen," by, I think, Richard Harding Davis he had also played the rôle of the detective. He was waiting, however, for a much better post, as huntsman to the Rockaway Hunt, a Long Island fashionable club, and this post, oddly enough, was in the gift, he told me, of Davis. It had been practically promised to him, he might hear any day. . . . The story of his many jobs and wanderings interested us, and his theatre work promised to be helpful in many ways to what was called my "room-mate." Boyde's experience of New York generally was invaluable to us both, and the fact that he had nowhere to sleep that night (having been turned out by his landlady) gave us the opportunity to invite him to our humble quarters. We mentioned the other tenants, but he said that made no difference, he would sleep on the sofa. He dined with us at

Krisch's; he was extremely hard up; luckily, we still had enough to invite a friend. His only luggage was a small bag, for he told us, with a rueful smile, that his clothes were all in pawn. I had an extra suit or two which, being of about my size, he was able to wear.

I felt immensely drawn to him, and his story touched my pity as well as stirred my admiration. It was a happy evening we all spent in the little bedroom, for he was not only well-read—he knew my various "Eastern books" and could talk about them interestingly—but had a fine tenor voice into the bargain. My fiddle came out of its case, and if the other lodgers disliked our duets, they did not, at any rate, complain. Boyde sang, he further told us, in the choir of the 2nd Avenue Baptist Church, and was assistant organist there as well, but made little out of this latter job, as he was only called upon when the other man was unable to attend. He even taught sometimes in the Sunday School—"to keep in the pastor's good books," as he explained with a laugh. But the chief thing he told us that night was the heartening information that, when all other chances failed, there was always a fair living to be earned by posing to artists at 50 cents an hour, or a dollar and a half for a full sitting of three hours. It was easy work and not difficult to get. He would gladly introduce us to the various studios, as soon as they opened, most of the artists being still in the country.

The search for work was a distressing business, when to the inevitable question "What can you do?" the only possible, but quite futile, reply was, "I'll do anything." I had collected the ten dollars from *Harper's Young People*, but a letter to Storey for more work brought no reply. The payment for the Toronto packing-case and for a week's rent of the rooms had reduced the exchequer so seriously that in a few days there was only the *Harper's* money in hand. Boyde, who stayed on at our urgent invitation, shared all he earned, and taught us, besides, the trick of using the free lunch-counters in hotels and saloons. For a glass of beer at five cents, a customer could eat such snacks as salted chip-potatoes, strips of

spiced liver sausage, small squares of bread, and pungent almonds, all calculated to stimulate unnatural thirst. The hotels provided more sumptuous dishes, though the price of drink was higher, and the calm way Boyde would help himself deliberately to a plate and fork, with an ample supply of the best food he could find, then carry it all back to his glass of lager under the bar-tender's very nose, was an ideal we could only hope to achieve by practice as long as his own. It was a question of nerve. Our midday meal was now invariably of this kind. The free lunch brigade, to which we belonged, was tolerantly treated by the majority of bar-tenders. A thirty cents dinner at Krisch's in the evening, choosing the most bulky dishes, ended the long tiring day of disappointing search. Boyde also made us buy oatmeal, with tin pot and fixture for cooking over the gas-jet. He was invaluable in a dozen ways, always cheery, already on the right side of Mrs. Bernstein, and turning up every evening with a dollar or two he had earned during the day.

He further taught us—the moment had come, he thought—to pawn. The packing-case in the basement was opened and rummaged through (a half-used cheque-book from Toronto days was a pathetic relic!) for things on which Ikey of 3rd Avenue might offer a few dollars. The tennis cups, won at little Canadian tournaments, seemed attractive, he thought, but our English overcoats would fetch most money. The weather was still comfortable . . . we sallied forth, hoping Mrs. Bernstein would not see us, carrying two tennis cups and a couple of good overcoats. Everybody stared and grinned, it seemed, though actually of course, no one gave us a glance. Boyde, humming Lohengrin, was absolutely nonchalant. For me, the pawnbroker's door provided sensations similar to those I knew when first entering the Hub just a year before.

"I want ten dollars on these," said Boyde, in a firm voice. "What'll you give? I shall take 'em out next week."

The Jew behind the counter gave one glance at the tennis cups, then pushed them contemptuously aside;

the overcoats he examined carefully, holding them up to the light for holes or threadbare patches, feeling the linings, turning the sleeves inside out.

"Good English cloth," mentioned Boyde. "Hardly used at all."

"A dollar each," said the man, laying them down as though the deal was finished. He turned to make out the tickets. He had not looked at us once yet.

Boyde picked them up and turned to go. "Two dollars," he said flatly, "I can get five in 4th Avenue."

"Go ged it," was the reply, the man's back still turned on us.

Boyde gave a cheery laugh. "Make it three dollars for the two," he suggested in an off-hand manner, "with another couple for the cups. They're prizes. We wouldn't lose them for worlds."

The man looked at us for the first time; we were fairly well dressed, obviously English, three hulking customers of a type he was not used to. Perhaps he really believed we might redeem the cups one day. "Worth less than nozzing," he said in his Yiddish accent. The keen, appraising look he gave us made me feel even less than that.

"Worth a lot to us, though," came Boyde's quick comment.

"Name?" queried the man, bending over a table with his back turned again.

"John Doe," came promptly, and a moment later, with the ticket, the Jew handed out four dirty dollar bills and fifty cents in coin. The interest was twelve per cent. per month, and the articles could be redeemed any time up to the end of a year.

"Never ask more than you really need at the moment," was Boyde's advice as we came out into the street. "I could have raised him a few dollars probably, but, remember, you'll have to get the coats out again before long."

When we got back to the room a Western Union telegram lay on the table for him; it was from Davis: "Please call to-morrow 3 o'clock without fail re Rock-

away," it read. And hope ran high. That night we spent half of our new money at Krisch's, giving a tip of thirty cents to Otto. . . .

Some ten days to a fortnight had passed, and October with its cooler winds had come, though life was still possible without overcoats. Our dress-clothes were now in Ikey's, moth-balls beside them. The Chinese laundry had been paid, but not the second week's rent, for money was very low and dinners of the smallest. Practice at the free lunch counters had improved our methods of strolling up absent-mindedly, perceiving the food apparently for the first time, then picking up with quick fingers the maximum quantity. Kay, meanwhile, had secured a part in a touring company which was to start out for a series of one-night stands in about three weeks, his salary of fifteen dollars to begin with the first night. He was already rehearsing. My own efforts had produced nothing. Boyde, too, had not yet landed his huntsman job, which was to include comfortable quarters as well as a good salary. I had been down with him when he went to see Davis, waiting in the street till he came out, and the interview, though reassuring, he told me, involved a little further delay still. He, therefore, continued his odd jobs, calling at the theatre every night and matinée to see if he was wanted, playing the organ in church occasionally, and getting a small fee for singing in the choir. He shared with us as we shared with him; he slept on the sofa in our room; he was welcome to wear my extra suits of clothes—until Ikey might care to see them.

Then, quite suddenly, fate played a luckier card.

Kay and I were at the free lunch counter of the Fifth Avenue Hotel, Boyde having been called away to do something at his Baptist church, when Bob Mantell strolled up, bringing a tall, grey-haired man with him. The next minute he was introducing me to Cecil Clay, with a remark to the effect that he must surely have known my father, and that I surely must know Mr. Clay's famous book on whist. Cecil Clay, anyhow, was a kindly old Englishman, and evidently was aware how the land lay

with us, for a few minutes later he had given me a card to Laffan, manager of the *New York Sun*. "Go and see him the day after to-morrow," he said. "Meanwhile I'll write him a line about you."

Had it been possible to go then and there I should have felt more confidence and less nervousness than when I called at the appointed hour. The interval, with its hopeful anticipation and alternate dread, was a bad preparation for appearing at my best. After a few questions, however, Mr. Laffan, a man of very powerful position in the newspaper world, a great art collector and connoisseur, head, too, of the Laffan News Bureau, said that Mr. McCloy, managing editor of the *Evening Sun*, would give me a trial as a reporter, and I could start next Monday—four days away—at fifteen dollars a week. I had mentioned that I knew French and German, and could write shorthand. He spoke to me in both languages, but, luckily, he did not think of testing the speed and accuracy of my self-taught Pitman.

On the staff of a great New York newspaper! That it was anti-British and pro-Tammany did not bother me. A reporter! A starting salary of £3 a week that might grow! I wrote the news to my father that very afternoon, and that night Kay, Boyde and I had almost a festive dinner at Krisch's restaurant—that is, we ended with sweets and coffee. The following day I spent practising my rusty shorthand, about 90 words a minute being my best speed consistent with legibility. Would it be fast enough? I might have spared myself the trouble for all the use shorthand was to me on the *Evening Sun* during the two years I remained with it. Only once—much later, when I was with the *New York Times*, did it prove of value, securing for me on that occasion an increase of salary. . . . The slogan of the *Sun*, printed on each copy was, "If you See it in the *Sun* it is so!" accuracy the strong point. The *Times* preferred a moral tinge: "All the News that's Fit to Print." Both mottoes were faithfully observed and rigidly practised.

CHAPTER XII

IF any young man learning values wants to know the quickest way to study the seamy side of life, to understand the darkest aspects of human nature, and incidentally, to risk the loss of every illusion he ever had, let him become a reporter on an up-to-date New York newspaper. Within six months he will be apt to believe that every man has his price; he will become acquainted with vice, crime, horror, terror, and every kind of human degradation; theft, murder, arson will seem commonplaces, forgery a very ordinary affair; men and women, it may even seem to him, "go straight," not because of any inherent principle of goodness in them, but because that degree of temptation which constitutes their particular "price" has not yet offered itself.

Passion of every type, abnormal, often incredible, will be his daily study; if he reflects a little he will probably reach the conclusion that either jealousy in some form, or greed for money, lie at the root of every crime that is ever committed. The overwhelming power of these two passions will startle him, at any rate, and his constant association with only one aspect of life, and that the worst and lowest, will probably produce the conviction that, given only the opportunity, everybody is bad. His conception of women may suffer in particular. The experience, contrariwise, may widen his tolerance and deepen his charity; also, it may leave him as it left me, with an ineradicable contempt for those who, born in ease, protected from the temptations due to poverty and misery, so carelessly condemn the weak, the criminal and the outcast.

With bigger experience may come, in time, a better view; equally, it may never come. Proportion is not so easily recovered, for the mind, at an impressionable age,

has been deeply marked. The good, the beautiful, the lovely, in a New York paper, is very rarely "news"; it is considered as fake, bunkum, humbug, a pose; it is looked at askance, regarded with suspicion, as assumed by someone for the purpose of a "deal"; it is rarely worth its space, at any rate. A reporter finds himself in a cynical school; he is lucky if he escape in the end with a single rag of illusion to his back. If he has believed, up to the age of twenty-one, as I did, that the large majority of people are decent, kindly, honest folk, he will probably lose even that last single rag. On the *Evening Sun*, certainly, it was not the good, the beautiful, the clean, that constituted the most interesting news and got scare headlines and extra editions. I give, of course, merely the impression made upon my own mind and type, coloured as these were, some thirty years ago, by a characteristically ignorant and innocent upbringing. . . .

The important newspapers, in those days, were all "down town," grouped about Park Row, and the shabby, tumble-down building of the *Sun* was not imposing. The *World* and *Times* towered above it; the *Morning Advertiser*, the *Evening Telegram*, even the *Recorder* were better housed; the *Journal* had not yet brought W. R. Hearst's methods from San Francisco. For all its humble offices, the *Sun* was, perhaps, the greatest power in the city. It was openly Tammany; it had a grand, courageous editor, Charles A. Dana. "Charles A." was an imposing figure, a man of immense ability, a "crank" perhaps in certain ways, but a respected chief of outstanding character and fearless policy. . . . My own chief, however, was W. C. McCloy, and the offices where he reigned as managing editor were housed on the top floor of the rickety building, with the machinery making such a din and roar and clatter that we had to shout to make ourselves heard at all. Metal sheets that clanged and pinged as we walked on them covered the floors. It was amid this pandemonium I had my first interview with him. An iron spiral staircase led from the quiet workrooms of the *Morning Sun*, on the first floor, to the dark,

low-ceilinged space, where the whirring printing presses were not even partitioned off from the tables of editorial departments or reporters. It was like a factory going at full speed. Hours were 8.30 A.M. to 6.30 P.M., or later if an extra—a 6th or 7th—edition was called for. I arrived at 8.15.

In a dark corner of this machinery shop I introduced myself with trepidation to McCloy, mentioning Mr. Laffan's name, and saw the blank look come and go, as he stared at me with "Blackwood, Blackwood? . . . Oh, yes, I remember! You're fifteen dollars a week. A Britisher from Canada. . . . Well, you'll have to look lively here!" He seemed so intensely busy and preoccupied, his mind so charged with a sort of electric activity, that I wondered he had time to open and shut his mouth. A small, thin man, with the slightest of frail bodies, nervous, delicately shaped hands, gimlet eyes that pierced, a big head with protruding forehead, a high-pitched, twanging voice that penetrated easily above the roar of the machinery, and a general air of such lightning speed and such popping, spitting energy that I felt he might any moment flash into flame or burst with a cracking report into a thousand pieces—this was the man on whom my living depended for many months to come. The phrase "New York hustler," darted across my mind; it stood in the flesh before me; he lived on wires. Buried among this mechanic perfection, however, I caught, odd to relate, an incongruous touch—of kindness, even of tenderness. There were gentle lines in that electric face. He had a smile I liked.

"What are you out here for? Where have you come from? What have you been doing? What d'you know?" he asked with the rapidity of a machine-gun. The shorthand rate must have been 400 words per minute.

I never talked so quickly in my life as in my brief reply. I watched the smile come and go. While he listened, he was shouting instructions to reporters then streaming in, to office boys, to printers, to sub-editors; but his eyes never left my face, and when I had finished

my lightning sketch, the machine-gun crackled with its deadliest aim again: "Only *one* thing counts here; get the news and get it *quick;* method of no consequence. Get the news and get it *first!*" He darted off, for the first edition went to press at 10.30. As he went, however, he turned his head a moment. "Write a story," he backfired at me. "Write your experiences—From Methodism to Running a Saloon,"—and he vanished amid the whirling machinery in the back of the great room.

I have the pleasantest recollections of W. C. McCloy; he was just, fair, sympathetic, too, when time permitted; he showed me many little kindnesses; he was Presbyterian, his parents Scotch; he was also—sober. I proved a poor reporter, and my salary remained at fifteen dollars all the time I was with the paper, yet once he kept a place open for me for many weeks; he even took me back when the consideration was hardly deserved.

That first day, however, I spent on tenterhooks, fully expecting to be "fired" at its end. I found a corner at the big reporters' table, and, having seized some "copy" paper from the general pile, I sat down to write "From Methodism to Running a Saloon," without the faintest idea of how to do it. A dozen reporters sat scribbling near me, but no one paid me the smallest attention. They came and went; at another table Cooper, the City Editor (anglice news-editor) issued the assignments; the editorial writers arrived and sat at their little desks apart; the roar and pandemonium were indescribable; the first edition was going to press, with McCloy in a dozen places at once, but chiefly watching the make-up over the shoulders of the type-setters in the back of the room. . . . I wrote on and on; I believed it was rather good; no one came to stop me, no one looked at my "copy" or told me what length was wanted; once or twice, McCloy, flashing by, caught my eye, but with a glance that suggested he didn't know who I was, why I was there at all, or what I was writing. . . . The hours passed; the first edition was already out; the reporters were reading hurriedly their own work in print, delighted

if it was on the front page; the space-men were measuring the columns to see how much they had earned; and the make-up for the second edition, out at noon, was being hastened on behind the buzzing machinery in the rear.

By this time I must have written two columns at least, and I began to wonder. Perhaps I was to appear in the principal final edition at six o'clock! On the front page! The article, evidently, was considered important! The notion that I was making a fool of myself, being made a fool of, rather, also occurred to me. I wrote on and on . . . it was hunger finally that stopped me. I was famished. I turned to an albino reporter next me, a mere boy, whose peculiarity had earned him the nickname "Whitey." Was I allowed to go out for lunch? "Just tell Cooper you're going," he replied. "Come out with me," he added, "if you've finished your story. I'm going in a moment." I finished my "story" then and there, putting the circle with three dots in it which, he explained, meant *finis* to the printers. "Just hand it in to Cooper, and we'll get right out," he said. I obeyed, Cooper taking my pile of "copy" with a grin, and merely nodding his head when I mentioned lunch. He was a young man with thick curly black hair, big spectacles that magnified his good-natured eyes, only slightly less rapid and electric than McCloy, but yet so unsure of himself that the reporters soon found him out—and treated him accordingly. I saw my precious "copy" shoved to one side of his desk, but I never saw it again, either in print or elsewhere. No mention was ever made of it. It was, doubtless, two columns of the dullest rubbish ever scribbled in that office.

"I guess Mac only wanted to see what you could do," explained the albino, as we swallowed "sinkers" (heavy dough scones) and gulped down coffee at Childs' Cheap Lunch Counter round the corner. Whitey had invited me to lunch; he "put me wise" about a thousand things; showed me how to make a bit on my weekly expense-account, if I wanted to; how one could "sneak off" about five o'clock, if one knew the way; and, most

useful of all, warned me as to accuracy in my facts and the right way to present them. A "story" whether it was the weather story or a murder story, should give in a brief first paragraph the essential facts—this satisfied the busy man who had no time to read more; the second paragraph should amplify these facts—for those who wanted to know more; afterwards—for those interested personally in the story—should come "any stuff you can pick up." An item that seemed exclusive—a "scoop" or "beat" he called it—should come in the very beginning, so as to justify the headlines.

"Whitey" was always a good friend to me. "Make friends with the reporters on other papers," he advised, "then you won't get badly left on the story you're all 'covering.' Most of 'em give up all right." He gave me names of sundry who never "gave up," skunks he called them.

As we hurried back to the office half an hour later, he dived into a drug store on the ground floor. The way most of the reporters frequented this drug store puzzled me for a time, till I learned that whisky was to be had there in a little back room. The chemist had no license, but by paying a monthly sum to the ward man of the district—part of immense revenues paid to Tammany by every form of law-breaking, from gambling-hells and disorderly houses to far graver things—he was allowed to dispense liquor. It was a pretty system, marvellously organized down to the lowest detail; cash to the ward man opened most doors; a policeman paid $300 before he even got a nomination on the force; vice paid gigantic tribute; but the people liked a Tammany Government because "they knew where they were" with it, though the *Sun*, my paper, was the only journal that boldly supported it—for which Charles A. Dana was forever being attacked. I acquired much inside experience of the secret workings of Tammany Hall before my newspaper days came to an end. . . . It appalled me.

That afternoon, I had two assignments, and failed badly in both. The first was to find a company promoter

who had got into trouble, and to ask him "all about it." I could not find him; his house, his office, his club knew him not. After two hours' frantic search, I returned crestfallen, expecting to be dismissed there and then. Cooper, however, cut short my lengthy explanations with a shrug of the shoulders, and sent me up to the Fort Lee woods, across the Hudson River, to find out "all about" a suicide whose body had just been discovered under the trees. "Get his name right, why he did it, and what the relatives have to say," were his parting words. The Fort Lee woods were miles away, I saw the body—an old man with a bullet hole in his temple, I found his son at the police station, and asked him what his tears and grief made permissible, the answer being that "he had no troubles and we can't think what made him do it." Then I telephoned these few facts to the office. On getting back myself at half-past six when the last edition was already on the streets, Cooper showed me the final edition of the *Evening World*. It had a column on the front page with big head-lines. The suicide was a defaulter, and the reporter gave a complete story of his gambling life. Cooper offered no comment. The *Evening World* had got "a beat"; and I had failed badly. I sat down at the reporters' table and wondered what would happen, and then saw, lying before me, our own last edition with exactly the same story, similar big headlines, and all the important facts complete. An interview with the company promoter was also in print. I was at a loss to understand what had happened until Whitey, on the way into the drug-store a little later, explained things: the United Press, a news agency that "covered" everything, had sent the story. The "flimsy" men, so called because they wrote on thin paper that made six copies at once, were very valuable. "Make friends with them," said Whitey, "and no one will ever get a beat on you. They're paid a salary and don't care. It's only the space-men, as a rule, who won't give up."

CHAPTER XIII

AS a new "bum reporter," however, I had a hectic life, but rapidly made friends with the other men, and a mutual loathing of the work brought us easily together. Friday was pay-day; by Wednesday everybody was trying to borrow money—one dollar, usually—from everybody else, the debts being always faithfully repaid when the little envelopes were collected at the cashier's office downstairs.

My first week's reporting passed in a whirl of feverish excitement. Assignments of every possible kind were hurled at me. I raced and flew about. The "Britisher," the "English accent," were a source of amusement to the staff, but there was no ill-nature. Cooper seemed to like me; he chuckled; he even gave me hints. "Well, Mr. Britisher, did you get it this time?" Few of my first efforts were used, the flimsy report being printed instead, but a divorce case in special sessions, and interviews with the principals in it, brought me into notice, the story being put in the front page of the first edition. When I came down on the following Monday, McCloy whipped up to me like a steel spring released. "You can cover the Tombs this morning," he rattled. "Anything big must be in by ten at the latest. Use judgment and pick out the best stories. Don't let anyone get a beat on you." He flashed away, and I tore down to the Tombs Police Court.

The Tombs—I can smell to-day its peculiar mixture of extremely dirty humanity, cheap scent, very old clothes, Chinese opium, stale liquor, iodoform, and a tinge of nameless disinfectant. In winter the hot-air which was the means of heating the court whose windows were never opened, and in summer the stifling, humid atmosphere, to say nothing of the added flavour of acid perspiration, were

equally abominable. The building, with its copy of Egyptian architecture, vies in gloom with the prison in Venice, though the former takes unpleasant precedence—a veritable Hall of Eblis, with thick walls, impressive portals, a general air of hopeless and portentous doom about even its exterior. There was a grimness in its dark passages that made the heart sink, truly an awe-ful building. The interior was spick and span and clean as a hospital ward, but the horror of that repellent outside leaked through somehow. Both inside and outside, the Tombs Prison became as familiar to me as my room in East 19th Street; many a prisoner I interviewed in his cell, many a wretch I talked with through the bars of his last earthly cage in Murderers' Row; I never entered the forbidding place without a shudder, nor stepped into the open air again without relief.

The routine of the police court, too, became mechanical as the months went by. The various reporters acted in concert; we agreed which stories we would use, and in this way no paper got a "beat" on the others. The man on duty stood beside the Tammany magistrate, making his notes as each case came up. It was a depressing, often a painful, business.

The cases rattled by very quickly—arson, burglary, forgery, gambling, opium dens, street women, all came up, but it was from assaults that we usually culled our morning assortment for the first edition. Negroes used a razor, Italians a stiletto, white men a knife, a pistol, a club or a sandbag. Women used hatpins mostly.

It was, of course, some particular feature, either picturesque or horrible, that lent value to a case. Gradually my "nose for news" was sharpened. It was a friendly little German Jew, named Freytag, who taught me how to make the commonest police story readable. I had just "given up" the facts about a Syrian girl who had been stabbed by a jealous lover, and the reporters all round me were jotting down the details. Freytag, who worked for Hermann Ridder's *Staatszeitung*, looked over my shoulder. "That's no good," he said. "Don't begin 'Miriam so-

and-so, living at such a place, was stabbed at two o'clock this morning by Whatshisname. . . .' That's not interesting. Begin like this: 'A mysterious crime with an exotic touch about it was committed in the early hours this morning when all worthy New Yorkers were enjoying their beauty sleep. . . . Far away, where the snows of the Taurus Mountains gleam to heaven, the victim, a lovely Syrian maid, once had her home. . . .'" I followed his advice, though my version was severely blue-pencilled, but his point—selecting a picturesque angle of attack—was sound and useful.

The police court work was over by half-past ten, and I was then generally sent on to report the trials in Special or General Sessions. These, naturally, were of every sort and kind. Divorce, alienation of affection and poison trials were usually the best news. My hair often stood on end, and some of the people were very unpleasant to interview. The final talk before a man went to the Chair was worst of all. If the case was an important one, I had to get an interview in the Tombs Prison cell before the day's trial—there was no *sub judice* prohibition in New York. Inevitably, I formed my own opinion as to a man's innocence or guilt; the faces, gazing at me through bars, would often haunt me for days. Carlyle Harris, calm, indifferent, cold as ice, I still see, as he peered past the iron in Murderers' Row, protesting his innocence with his steely blue eyes fixed on mine; he was a young medical student accused of poisoning his wife with morphia: he was electrocuted . . . and Lizzie Borden . . . though this was in Providence, Rhode Island—who took all her clothes off, lest the stains of blood betray her, before killing her father and mother in their sleep. . . .

Some of the cases made a lasting and horrible impression; some even terrified. The behaviour of individuals, especially of different races, when sentence was given also left vivid memories; negroes, appealing hysterically to God and using the most extraordinary, invented words, the longer the better; the stolid, unemotional Chinamen; the voluble Italian; the white man, as a rule, quiet,

controlled, insisting merely in a brief sentence that he was innocent. In a story, years later (*Max Hensig, Bacteriologist and Murderer*), the facts were taken direct from life. It needed more than fifteen years to dim their memory. I remained the Tombs reporter for the best part of a loathed, distressing, horror-laden year.

There were pleasanter intervals, of course. The French paper, *Le Courier des Etats Unis*, published a short story every Monday, and one day I translated an exceptionally clever one, and submitted it to McCloy. It was printed; subsequently, I was allowed an afternoon off weekly, provided I translated a story each time, and though no money was paid for these, I secured a good many free hours to myself. These hours I spent in the free library in Lafayette Place, devouring the Russians, as well as every kind of book I could find on psychology; or else in going out to Bronx Park, a long tram journey, where I found trees and lovely glades and water. Bronx Park, not yet the home of the New York "Zoo," was a paradise to me, the nearest approach to the woods that I could find. Every Sunday, wet or fine, I went there. In a *cache* I hid a teapot, and would make a tiny fire and drink milkless tea. I could hear the wind and see the stars and taste the smell of earth and leaves, the clean, sweet things. . . .

One morning in the second week of my apprenticeship, I interviewed a lion.

"Afraid of wild animals, Mr. Britisher?" inquired Cooper, looking at me quizzically. I stared, wondering what he meant. It was my duty to have read the morning paper thoroughly, but there had been no mention of any wild animal. I replied that I thought I didn't mind wild animals.

"Take your gun," said Cooper, "and get up to East 20th Street, between Third and Fourth Avenues. Bostock's Circus came to town last night late. Their lion's escaped. They've chased it into a stable. Killed a valuable horse. Neighbourhood's paralysed with terror. It's a man-

eater. Send down bulletins about it. Now, better get a move on!"

On leaving the elevated train at East 18th Street, the streets were black with people, they even pressed up the front steps of the houses. The word "lion" was in everybody's mouth. Something about Cooper's voice and eyes had made me suspect a "fake." As I forced my way through towards 20th Street, there came a roar that set the air trembling even above the din of voices. It was certainly no fake.

On reaching 20th Street, the cordon of police, with pistols ready, keeping the crowd in order, showed plainly where the stable was. Gradually I bored a way through. The stable stood back from the road, a courtyard in front of it. A ladder, crowded already with reporters climbing up, led to a hayloft just above. I met the *Evening Telegram* man, whom I knew, half-way up this ladder. "Got a messenger boy? No! Then you can share mine," he offered good-naturedly. The only occupants of the yard were a dozen of these messenger boys, waiting to take the "copy" to the various newspaper offices. It was 8.30 A.M.

I noticed to my surprise that the *Evening Telegram* man was a star reporter; three rungs above him, to my still greater surprise, climbed Richard Harding Davis. My vanity was stirred. This was a big story, yet Cooper had chosen me! As I squeezed up the ladder, my hands stuffed with paper, the lion below gave forth an awe-inspiring roar; it was a dreadful sound. The great doors of wood seemed matchwood easily burst through. The crowd swayed back a moment, then, with a cheer, swayed forward again.

In the loft I found some twenty reporters; each time the brute gave its terrible roar they scuttled into corners, behind the hay, even up into the rafters of the darkened loft. Pistol shots accompanied every roar, and the added terror lest a bullet from below might pierce the boards on which we stood, made us all jump about like dervishes. One man wrote his story, perched in the dark on the

highest rafter, from which he never once moved. I scribbled away, and threw down my "stuff" to the boy below.

Meanwhile the circus officials were doing their best to force the great beast into a cage. This cage stood ready against the outside doors in the yard, and at the right moment these doors would be swiftly opened. On being driven into the stable, the animal had found, and quickly killed, a trotting horse, valued at $2,000, standing in its stall. This detail I at first disbelieved, but when my turn came to kneel and peer through the trap-door for feeding the hay down into the dark stable below, I found it was all true. In the centre of the floor the great lion was plainly visible, not six feet below my own face, lying with two paws stretched upon the carcass of a torn, dead horse. The smell of flesh and blood rose to my nostrils. In a dim corner perched on a refrigerator, sat one of the trainers, a pistol in his hand. In another corner, but invisible from my peephole, crouched another circus man, also with his pistol, and each time the lion made an ugly move, both men fired off their weapons. . . . I wrote more "bulletins," and dropped them down to a messenger boy in the yard. He hurried off, then returned to fetch more "copy"; I sent at least a column for the first edition. I felt a very proud reporter.

After two hours of thrills and scares, the news spread that the Strong Man of the circus was on his way down, a fearless Samson of a fellow who lifted great weights. The news proved true. A prolonged cheer greeted him. He acknowledged it with a sweeping bow. He wore diamonds and a top hat. Swaggering up among the reporters, he announced in a loud voice: "Boys! I'm going to fix that lion, and I'm going to fix it right away!"

The boastful bluff received no believing cheer in response, but to my amazement, the fellow proved as good as his talk. He said no further word, he just lifted the trap-door in the floor and began to squeeze himself through—straight down on to the very spot where the lion lay,

crouching below on the dead horse. He dropped. We heard the thud. We also heard the appalling roar that followed, the quick pistol shots, the shouts, the excited cries—then silence. The reporter at the trap-door called out to us what was happening. . . . That Strong Man was a hero.

Ten or fifteen minutes later, the big stable-doors swung open, and the cage, with the lion safely inside it, emerged on a high-wheeled truck into full view of the cheering crowd. On the top of the cage, sweeping his shiny top hat about, bowing, waving his free hand with modest dignity to the admiring thousands, the Strong Man sat enthroned, cross-legged, proud and smiling. The procession through the streets of the city was a triumphal progress that lasted most of the day. That night Bostock's Circus opened to the public.

I hurried back to the office, and had the joy of seeing the first edition hawked and cried about the streets, even before I got there. Big head-lines about a "Man-eating Lion," a "Two Thousand Dollar Trotting Horse," "Heroic Rescuer," and the rest, met my eye everywhere. Cooper, however, made no remark or comment, sending me on at once to report a murder trial at special sessions, and in half an hour the gruesome thrills of a horrible poison case made the lion and the strong man fade away.

"Read your morning paper?" Cooper asked, when I appeared next morning. I nodded. The lion story, I had noticed, filled only half a stick of print. "Read the advertisements?" he asked next. I saw a twinkle in his eye, and quickly scanned the circus advertisements about the man-eating lion that had killed a trotting horse, and a strong man whose courage had done this and that, saving numerous lives . . . but I was still puzzled by Cooper's twinkling eye. He offered no word of explanation; I learned the truth from someone else later. The toothless, aged lion, gorged with food and doped as well, had been pushed into the stable overnight, the carcass of a horse, valued at $10, had been dragged in after it.

The newspapers had been notified, and the long advertisements, of course, were paid for in the ordinary way, but the free advertisement obtained was of a kind that mere dollars could not buy.

Occasional interludes of this sort certainly brightened the sordid daily routine, but they were rare. A big fire was a thrilling experience, a metal badge pinned to the coat allowing the reporter to go as near as he liked and to run what risks he pleased. Such work became, with time, mechanical in a sense, it occurred so often, arson, too, being very frequent, especially among the Jews of the East side. Even in those days the story of the two Jews was a "chestnut": "I'm thorry your blace of business got burnt down last Tuesday," says Ikey. To which Moses replies: "Hush! It's next Tuesday!"

The rôle of the reporter in New York, of course, was an accepted one; publicity and advertisement were admittedly desirable; the reporter as a rule was welcomed; privacy was very rare; a reporter could, and was expected to, intrude into personal family affairs where, in England, he would be flung into the street. . . . Other interviews were of a pleasanter kind; I remember Henry Irving and Ellen Terry in their special train, Sarah Bernhardt, at the Hoffman House hotel, and many a distinguished foreigner I was sent to interview because I could speak their languages. The trip to meet the Atlantic steamer at Quarantine I regarded as a day off: it could be made to last for hours. I saw the coast, moreover, and smelt the sea. . . .

Most of my work on the *Evening Sun*, at any rate, took me among the criminal and outcast sections of the underworld. In those days the police, as a whole, were corrupt, brutal, heartless; I saw innocent men against whom they had a grudge, or whom they wanted out of the way for some reason, "railroaded to gaol" on cooked-up evidence; sickening and dreadful scenes I witnessed. . . . The valueless character of human evidence I learned daily in the trials I reported, so that even a man who was trying to tell the truth seemed unable to achieve it.

Tammany had its slimy tentacles everywhere and graft was the essence of success in every branch of public life. A police captain had his town and country house, perhaps his yacht as well. . . . The story of Tammany has been told again and again. It is too well known for repetition. I watched its vile methods from the inside with a vengeance; its loathsome soul I saw face to face. The city, too, I soon knew inside out, especially its darker, unclean quarters. Chinatown, Little Africa, where, after dark, it was best to walk in the middle of the street, "Italy," the tenement life of the overcrowded, reeking East side. . . . I made friends with strange people, feeling myself even in touch with them, something of an outcast like themselves. My former life became more and more remote, it seemed unreal; the world I now lived in seemed the only world; these evil, depraved, tempted, unhappy devils were not only the majority, but the real, ordinary humanity that stocked the world. More and more the under-dog appealed to me. The rich, the luxurious, the easily-placed, the untempted and inexperienced, these I was beginning to find it in me to look down on, even to despise. *Mutatis mutandis*, I thought to myself, daily, hourly, where would *they* be? . . . Where would *I* myself be . . . ?

Bronx Park, Shelley, the violin, the free library, organ recitals in churches, my Eastern books, and meetings of the Theosophical Society, provided meanwhile the few beauty hours to which I turned by way of relief and relaxation. One and all fed my inner dreams, gave me intense happiness, offered a way of escape from a daily atmosphere I loathed like poison. Sometimes, sitting in court, reporting a trial of absorbing interest, my eye would catch through the dirty window a patch of blue between the clouds . . . and instantly would sweep up the power of the woods, the strange joy of clean solitary places in the wilderness, the glamour of a secret little lake where loons were calling and waves splashing on deserted, lonely shores. I heard the pines, saw the silvery moonlight, felt the keen wind of open and untainted spaces, I smelt the very earth

and the perfume of the forests. . . . A serious gap would follow in my report, so that I would have to borrow from the flimsy man, or from another reporter, what had happened in the interval. In this connexion there comes back to me a picture of a *World* man whose work constituted him a star reporter, but who could write nothing unless he was really drunk. With glazed eyes he would catch the witness and listen to question and answer, while with a pencil he could scarcely direct, he scribbled in immense writing three or four sloping lines to each page of "copy" paper. It always astonished me that such work could be any good, but once I made a shorthand note of several of his pages, and found them printed verbatim in the next edition, without a single blue-pencil alteration. When this man sat next me, my intervals of absent-mindedness did not matter. His big writing enabled me to crib easily all I had missed.

Other compensating influences, too, I found with my "room-mates," especially with Boyde, to whom I had become devotedly attached. I was uncommonly lucky to have such friends, I thought. Talking with Boyde, playing the fiddle to his singing, sharing my troubles with his subtle, sympathetic, well-read mind, was an unfailing pleasure, that made me look forward intensely to our evenings together, and helped me to get through many a day of repulsive and distasteful work. Compared with the charm and variety of Boyde, Kay seemed stolid, even unresponsive sometimes.

To live consciously is to register impressions; some receive many more of these per second than others, and thus enjoy an intenser and more varied life. The two-per-second mind finds the two-per-minute one slow, dull and stupid. Kay, anyhow, didn't "mind" things much, circumstances never troubled him, whereas Boyde and I minded them acutely. I envied Kay's power of sleeping calmly in that bed, careless of night-attacks until they actually came. The horror of New York, similarly, that was creeping into my blood had hardly touched him, though it certainly had infected Boyde. In my own make-

up lay something ultra-sensitive that took impressions far too easily. Not only did it vibrate with unnecessary eagerness to every change in sky and sea, but to every shade of attitude and manner in my fellows as well. I seemed covered with sore and tender places into which New York rubbed salt and acid every hour of the day. It wounded, not alone because I felt unhappy, but of itself. It hit me where it pleased. The awful city, with its torrential, headlong life, held for me something of the monstrous. Everything about it was exaggerated. Its racing speed, its roofs amid the clouds with the canyon gulfs below, its gaudy avenues dripping gold that ran almost arm in arm with streets little better than sewers of human decay and misery, its frantic noise, both of voices and mechanism, its lavishly organized charity and boastful splendour, and its deep corruption in the grip of a heartless and degraded Tammany—it was all this that painted the horror into my imagination as of something monstrous, non-human, almost unearthly. It became, for me, a scab on the skin of the planet, brilliant with the hues of fever, moving all over with its teeming microbes. I felt it, indeed, but half civilized.

This note of how I felt in these—my early years—rose up again the other day, as I read what O. Henry wrote to his outlaw friend from the Ohio Penitentiary about it. Al Jennings had just been pardoned. O. Henry had finished his terms some years before. They met again in a West 26th Street hotel, not far from my own room in Mrs. Bernstein's house. They talked of their terrible prison days.

"It's good you've been there," said O. Henry. "It's the proper vestibule to this city of Damned Souls. The crooks there are straight compared with the business thieves here. If you've got $2 on you, invest it now or they'll take it away from you before morning."

CHAPTER XIV

IN the East 19th Street room, meanwhile, things were going from bad to worse. Kay's touring company delayed its starting, and consequently his salary. Boyde's huntsman's job, equally, was postponed for various reasons, while his income from posing, from churchly activities, from the theatre as well, was reduced to a very few dollars a week. These he shared faithfully, but my $15 every Friday (usually $13 net when office loans had been repaid) were our only certain source of revenue.

After paying something on the room, the laundry in full, and buying oatmeal, dried apples, and condensed milk for the week to come, there remained barely enough for one man's meals, much less for the food of three, during the ensuing seven days. Boyde's contribution brought the budget to, perhaps, twenty dollars all told. Something, too, had to be allowed daily to car-fares for Kay, while my own expenses in getting about after assignments, only recoverable at the end of the week, were considerable. The weather was turning colder at the same time, for it was now past mid-October. Our overcoats had to be redeemed. Boyde's wisdom in obtaining only the strictly necessary became evident. We redeemed the overcoats out of my second week's pay. Boyde himself had no overcoat at all. As we were all about the same height and build, clothes were interchangeable. There was a discussion every morning, when I left the other two, in bed and on the sofa respectively, as to who should wear what.

We had now pawned with Ikey various items: a Gladstone bag, two top hats, some underwear, and two pairs of boots. These were on separate tickets, by Boyde's advice. Tennis trousers, and several summer shirts were

together on another ticket. All that winter Kay and I wore no underwear but a vest. The bag and top hats were taken out and put in again regularly every week for many months. There was only one article that, selfishly, I could never pawn or sell—the fiddle.

Dried apples and hot water—with expensive oatmeal we had to be very sparing—constituted our dinner for four nights out of the week; coffee and bread and butter for breakfast, coffee and "sinkers" for lunch completed my dietary. Occasionally Boyde or Kay, having been invited to a meal, brought home something in their pockets, but not often. We felt hunger every day, only the evening dried apples and hot water giving a sense of repletion that yet did not really allay the pangs of appetite, though it stopped the dull gnawing until sleep finally obliterated it. Kay and I, but never Boyde, oddly enough, had vivid and amusing dreams of food, and one invariable topic of conversation every night as we dined at Krisch's, or gobbled apples and oatmeal, was the menu we would order when things improved. . . . But Krisch's, after a time, we found too difficult and tempting, with the good smells, the sight of people eating at other tables, the lager beer, the perfume of cigars; and many a time, with the price of a dinner in our pockets, we preferred to eat in our room.

Another topic of conversation was our plan, myself its enthusiastic creator, to take up land in Canada and lead the life of settlers in the backwoods, which by contrast to our present conditions seemed to promise a paradise. Occasionally Kay spouted bits of Shakespeare, or rehearsed a rôle in one of the plays his touring company was to give. But it was the talks with Boyde about Eastern ideas and philosophy that were my keenest pleasure, for his appreciation and sympathetic understanding were a delight I thought about with anticipatory eagerness even during the day. My attachment to him deepened into affection.

The weeks went by; we scraped along somehow; Mrs. Bernstein was kept quiet—a relative term—by

cajoling, promises and bluff. We bullied her. When Kay's lordly talk of free seats at theatres failed to materialize, and Boyde's trick of leaving about telegrams received from Davis and others, especially one from August Belmont, the great banker, inviting him to lunch at a fashionable club—when these devices lost their "pull," I resorted to the power of the Press. Her husband's position, his orchestra, offered vulnerable points of attack; the vermin-infested room, for instance, might be unpleasantly described. . . .

For weeks we had paid nothing, everything worth fifty cents was pawned, Boyde's contribution had grown smaller and smaller, and the only addition to my salary had been a few dollars Kay had earned by posing to Smedley, one of Harper's illustrators. Things looked pretty dark, when luck turned suddenly; Kay received word from Gilmour, the organizer of his company, that he was to start touring on November 15th, and Boyde had a telegram from Davis—"Appointment confirmed, duties begin December 1st." This did not increase our cash in hand, but it increased our hope and raised our spirits. Kay and Boyde would both soon repay their share of past expenses. We should all three be in jobs a few weeks later. Early in November Kay actually left on his tour of one night stands in New York State, and Boyde left the mattress on the floor for the bed. A week after Kay sent us half his first salary, $7.50, which we gave to Mrs. Bernstein forthwith. The letter containing it was opened by Boyde, and dealt with while I was out.

It was a few days later, when I was alone one evening, that an Englishman who had played with us in the cricket match called to see me. I hardly remembered him, he had to introduce himself, the apologies to explain his sudden call were very voluble. He was well dressed and well fed, I noticed, a singer and concert accompanist; he annoyed me from the start by his hesitations, his endless humming and hawing. It was, he kept telling me, rather an intrusion; it was, he felt, of course, no concern of his; but "New York was a strange place, and—and

—er—er—well, after much reflection, I really felt it my duty—I decided to take the risk, that is, to—er——"

"To what?" I asked bluntly at last. "For heaven's sake, tell me."

I was beginning to feel uneasy. My threats to Mrs. Bernstein, perhaps, had gone too far. Besides, the effect of the apples was passing and I longed for bed.

He took a gulp. "To warn you," he said, with a grave and ominous expression.

It was a long-winded business before I got him to the point, and even then the point was not really explicit. New York, he kept repeating, was a dangerous place for inexperience, there were strange and desperate characters in it. In the end, I think, my manners exasperated him as much as his vagueness exasperated me, for when he told me he came about "someone very close to you," and I asked point-blank, "Is it someone sharing this room with me?" his final word was a most decided "Yes" —with nothing more. This "someone," I gathered, at any rate, was fooling me, was up to all sorts of tricks, was even "dangerous."

I was infuriated, though I felt a certain sinking of the heart as well. He was attacking either Kay or Boyde, my only friends, both of whom I trusted to the last cent, for both of whom I had sincere affection. If he knew anything definite or really important, why couldn't he say it and be done with it? I put this to him.

"I prefer not to be more explicit," he replied with an air. He was offended. His patronizing offer of advice and sympathy, his pride, were wounded. "I would rather not mention names. It's true all the same," he added. And my patience then gave way. I got up and opened the door. He went without a word, but just as I was about to slam the door after him, he turned.

"Remember," he said, half angrily, half gravely, "I've warned you. He's a real crook. He's already been in gaol."

I banged the door behind him. I felt angry but uncomfortable, and as the anger subsided my uneasiness

increased. The horrible feeling that there was truth in the warning harassed me. When Boyde came in an hour or so later, I pretended to be asleep. I told him nothing of my visitor, but through half-closed eyes I watched him as he moved about the room very quietly, lest he disturb my sleep. His delightful, kind expression, his frank blue eyes, the refinement and gentleness of his gestures, I noted them all for the hundredth time. His acts, too, I remembered; how he always shared his earnings, gave his help unstintingly, advice, a thousand hints, the value of his own sad and bitter experience. My heart ached a little. No, I reflected, it was certainly not Boyde who was the crook. My thoughts turned to Kay, who had just sent us half his salary. It was equally incredible. I wished I had treated my visitor differently. I wished I had kicked him out, instead of telling him to go. Sneak! A sneak with some evil motive into the bargain!

Things began to move now with a strange rapidity. It was as though someone who had been winding up machinery suddenly released the spring. Item by item, preparations had been completed—then, let her go! She went. . . .

The weeks that followed seemed as many months. I was alone with Boyde in a filthy, verminous room, food and money scarce, rent owing. Kay away, clothes negligible, my single asset being a job. I lost that job owing to illness that kept me for weeks in bed—in that bed. . . . And as "she went" I had the curious feeling that someone watched her going, someone other than myself. It was an odd obsession. Someone looked on and smiled. Certain practices, gathered from my "Eastern" reading, were no doubt responsible for this uncanny feeling, for with it ran also a parallel idea: that only a portion of my being suffered while another portion, untouched, serene and confident, accepting all that came with a kind of indifferent resignation, stood entirely apart, playing, equally, the rôle of a spectator. This detached spectator watched "her going" with close attention, even

with something of satisfaction. "Take it all," was its attitude; "avoid nothing; it is your due; for it is merely reaping what you sowed long ago. Face it to the very dregs. Only in this way shall you pay a just debt and exhaust it." So vital was this attitude in all that followed that it must be honestly mentioned.

A stabbing in the side had been bothering me for some days, making walking difficult and painful. A blow received while diving from our island—I hit a rock—began to ache and throb. I came home in the evenings, weary to the bone. There were headaches, and a touch of fever. The pain increased. There was a swelling. I went to bed. Boyde took down a letter to McCloy, asking for a day off, which was granted. The next day I turned up at 8.30, but had to come back to bed after the midday coffee and sinkers. "See a doctor," snapped McCloy, in his best maxim-firing manner, "and come back when you're fixed up again."

But there wasn't enough money for a doctor's fee of from two to five dollars. I lay up for three days, hoping for improvement which did not come. The pain and fever grew. Mrs. Bernstein, upset and even disagreeable, sent me bread and soup in the evening as well as the morning coffee. Boyde brought a few extras late at night. He was chasing a new post just then—organist to a church in Patterson, N.J.—and rarely got home before eleven, sometimes later. He brought long rolls of Vienna bread, a few white Spanish grapes, a tin of condensed milk. He slept peaceably beside me. His manner, once or twice, seemed different. I smelt liquor. "Someone stood me a drink," he explained, "and by God, I needed it. I'm fagged out." He was kind and sympathetic, doing all he could, all that his position allowed. He was very much in love at the moment with the daughter of the pastor of the Second Avenue Baptist Church, where he sang in the choir, and he confided his hopes and troubles about the affair to me. . . . It all gave me a queer feeling of unreality somewhere. In my feverish state I knew an occasional unaccustomed shiver. The

long day in bed, alone with my thoughts, waiting for Boyde's return, was wearisome to endlessness, by no means free from new, unpleasant reflections, yet when at last the door opened softly, and he came back, his arms full of the little extras mentioned, there was disappointment in me somewhere. It was not quite as I expected. Accompanying the disappointment were these new, faint twinges of uneasiness as well. I kept the gas burning all night. I watched Boyde's face, as he slept calmly beside me in that narrow bed, his expression of innocence and kindliness increased my feelings of gratitude, even of tenderness, towards him. There were deep lines, however, that sleep did not smooth out. "Poor devil, he's been through the mill!" This habit of watching him grew.

There was delay and trouble about the Rockaway Hunt post; studio sittings were scarce; the Baptist church organist was never unable to officiate; Morton Selton never missed a performance; and Boyde, as a result, though he still contributed what he could, earned next to nothing. If I was puzzled by his late hours, his explanations invariably cleared away my wonder. He always had a plausible excuse, one, too, that woke my sympathy. It was just at this time, moreover, that Kay wrote. The Canadian tour was such a failure that Gilmour was taking his troupe to the States, where they anticipated better houses. No salaries had been paid. They were now off to Pittsburg. Kay hoped to send some money before long.

I spent the weary hours reading. . . . On the third day, my symptoms worse, the door opened suddenly without a knock, and I saw an old man with a white moustache and spectacles peering round the edge at me. I laid down my "Gita" and stared back at him.

"Are you Mr. Blackwood?" he asked, with a marked German accent.

"Yes." I had not the faintest idea who he was.

He closed the door, took off his slouch hat, crossed the room, laid his small black bag on the sofa, then came

and stood beside my bed. He was extremely deliberate. I watched him anxiously. He said no word for some time, while we stared at one another.

He was of medium height, about sixty-five years old, with white hair, dark eyes behind magnifying spectacles, the strong face deeply lined, voice and manner stern to the point of being forbidding—but when I saw it rarely —a most winning smile. Except for the spectacles, he was like a small edition of Bismarck.

"I am a doctor," he said, after a prolonged silent inspection, "and I live down the street. Your friend, an Englishman, asked me to call. Are *you* English?" I told him I was a reporter on the *Evening Sun*, adding that I had no money at the moment. The suspicion his manner had not attempted to hide at once showed itself plainly. His manner and voice were brusque to offensiveness, as he said flatly: "I expect to be paid. I have a wife and child." He stood there, staring at me, hard and cold. I repeated that I had nothing to pay him with, and I lay back in bed, wishing he would go, for I felt uncomfortable and ashamed, annoyed as well by his unsympathetic attitude. "Humph!" he grunted, still staring without moving. There was an awkward silence I thought would never end. "Humph!" he grunted again presently. "I egsamine you anyhow. How old are you?"

"Twenty-two," I said, "and a bit."

"Humph!" he repeated, as he examined me rather roughly. "You're very thin. Too thin!"

He hurt me, and I did not answer.

"Not eating enough," he added, and then gave his verdict. It was an abscess, I must keep my bed for a month or six weeks, an operation might be necessary. . . .

I asked how much I owed him. "Two dollars," he said. He gave me his address, and I replied that I would bring the money to him as soon as I could, but that he need not call again. He stared severely at me with those magnified eyes.

"Haven't you got two dollars even?" he asked curtly.

"I've told you the truth. And, anyhow, I didn't

send for you. I didn't ask my friend to fetch you either."

I could think of nothing else to say. His verdict had flattened me out. I was angry, besides, with Boyde, for not consulting me first, though I knew he had done the right thing. Another period of awkward silence followed, during which the doctor never moved, but stood gazing down at me. Suddenly his eye rested on the book I had been reading. He put out a hand and picked it up. He glanced through the pages of the "Gita," then began to read more carefully. A few minutes passed. He became absorbed.

"*You* read this?" he asked presently. "*Ach was!*" There was a look of keen astonishment in his eyes; his gaze searched me as though I were some strange animal. I told him enough by way of reply to explain my interest. He listened, without a word, then presently picked up his bag and hat and moved away. At the door he turned a moment. "I come again to-morrow," he said gruffly, and he was gone.

In this way Otto Huebner, with his poignant tragedy, came into my life.

That evening, with the bread and soup, there was a plate of chicken; it was not repeated often, but he had spoken to Mrs. Bernstein, I discovered, for her attitude, too, became slightly pleasanter. I spent the long evening composing a letter to McCloy, which Boyde could take down next day. . . . I lay thinking of that curious gruff, rude old German, whose brusqueness, I felt sure, covered a big good heart. There was mystery about him, something unusual, something pathetic and very lovable. There was power in his quietness. Despite his bluntness, there was in his atmosphere a warm kindness, a sincerity that drew me to him. Also there was a darkness, a sense of tragedy somewhere that intrigued me because I could not explain it.

It was after he was gone that I felt all this. While he was in the room I had been too troubled and upset by his manner to feel anything but annoyance. Now that

he was gone his face and eyes and voice haunted me. His bleak honesty, I think, showed me, without my recognizing it, another standard.

Was it this, I wonder, that made me start a little when, about two in the morning, I heard a stealthy tread coming upstairs, and presently saw Boyde enter the room—carrying his boots in his hand? Was it this, again, that made me feign to be asleep, and a couple of hours later still, when I woke with a shiver, notice, for the first time, a new expression in the face that lay so calmly asleep beside me?

Behind the kindly innocence, I thought, there lay a darker look. It was like a shadow on the features. It increased my feelings of uneasiness, though as yet no definite thought had formulated itself in my mind.

CHAPTER XV

NEXT day there was a racing west wind that sent the clouds scudding across a bright blue sky. The doctor was to come at 3 o'clock. Boyde, in very optimistic mood, had gone out early, taking my letter to McCloy. He had a studio sitting; he was going to Patterson too; he would return as early as he could. The shadow of the night before had vanished; I no longer believed in it; I ascribed it to fever and nerves. He sang cheerily while he dressed in my thick brown suit, the only one not in pawn (everything else, now that I was in bed, had gone to Ikey), and his voice sounded delightful. In the afternoon he came back with the news that McCloy had read my letter and said "That's right. Tell him to be good to himself. He can come back." Also he had agreed to use translations of the French stories at five dollars each. Boyde brought a *Courier* in with him. Two letters from home arrived too. Both my father and mother, though having no idea what was going on, never missed a single week. My own letters were difficult to write. I had come to New York against my father's advice. I wrote home what I thought best.

At 3 o'clock the doctor came. My heart sank as I heard his step. I was in considerable pain. What would he be like? Would an operation be necessary? Would he speak about money again? Mrs. Bernstein, oily and respectful, a little awed as well, announced him. Without a word, without a glance in my direction, he walked over in his slow, deliberate way, and laid hat and bag upon the sofa. Then he turned and looked steadily at himself in the mirror for a period I thought would never end. After that he turned and looked at me.

He was an angel. His face was wreathed in smiles.

It beamed with good-nature, kindness, sympathy. He at once said something that was gentle, soothing, like music to me. My heart suddenly expanded in a most uncomfortable way. I believe a lump came up in my throat. This was all so contrary to what I had expected. He was not only an angel, he was a womanly angel. I must have been in a very weak state, for it was all I could do to keep my tears back. The same instant his eye fell on my fiddle case. He looked at it, then at me, then back again at the fiddle.

"You play?" he asked, with a twinkle in his big eyes.

"I ought to pawn it," I said, "but——"

"Don't," he answered with decision. He added an odd sentence: "It's an esgape from self." I remember that I couldn't say a word to this. His kindness melted me. The struggle to keep my eyes from betraying me seemed the most idiotic yet bitter I had ever known. I could have kissed the old man's hand, when he examined me then at once, but with a gentleness, even a tenderness, that both astonished me, yet did not astonish me at all. I felt, too, already the support of his mind and character, of his whole personality, of a rugged power in him, of generosity, true goodness, above all, of sympathy. I think he had made up his mind to treat me for nothing. No reference, in any case, was made to money; nor did I dare even to mention it myself. An operation, moreover, of any big kind, was not necessary; he thought he could save me that; he performed a small one then and there, for he had brought all that was required for it. The pain seemed nothing, his kindness made me indifferent to it. "You are brave," he said, with a smile that seemed to me really beautiful, when it was over. "That hurt, I know." He promised to come daily to drain the wound and so forth; he bandaged me up; a month to six weeks would see me out of bed, he hoped; he packed up his bag, but, instead of leaving the room, he then sat down deliberately and began to talk.

I was too surprised, too happy, to wonder why he

stayed. His talk was food and drink to me. He picked up my few books, and sat reading quietly to himself when he saw I was getting tired. De Quincey's "Confessions" interested him especially, and he asked if he might borrow it. He took also "Sartor Resartus." I slipped into German, to his keen delight, and told him about the Moravian Brotherhood School in the Black Forest. A sketch of the recent past I gave him too. He listened with great attention, asking occasional questions, but always with real tact, and never allowing me to tire myself.

Though it was obvious, even to my stupidity, that he regarded me rather as a "specimen" of some sort, there was heart in all he said and did. Otto Huebner poured balm into all my little wounds that afternoon, but about himself he told me hardly anything. While he drew me out, with skill and sympathy, he hid himself behind that impenetrable mystery I had already noted the previous day. I say purposely that of himself he told me "hardly anything," because one detail did escape him inadvertently. An hour later, as he was leaving, he turned his smile on me from the door. "I send you something," he said shortly. "My vife makes goot broth. I cannot do much. I have not got it."

One other thing I noticed about his visit, when towards the end, Boyde came in unexpectedly, bringing a small bunch of the yellow Spanish grapes. In his best, most charming manner he spoke with the doctor. The doctor's face, however, darkened instantly. His features, it seemed to me, froze. His manner was curt. He scarcely replied. And when he left a little later he did not include my friend in his good-bye. It puzzled me. It added to my uneasiness as well.

Boyde, who apparently had noticed nothing, explained that he had to go out again to an appointment with Davis about the Rockaway Hunt post; he did not return that night at all.

I listened to the city clocks striking midnight, one, two, three . . . he did not come. I listened to the

howling wind as well. Imagination tried feebly to construct a happier state, lovelier conditions, a world nearer to the heart's desire. While waiting for midnight to strike, I said to myself, thinking of yesterday and to-morrow, with all the one had meant and the other might mean to me:

"Yesterday is now twenty-four hours away, but in a minute it will be only one minute away."

I treated the hidden to-morrow similarly. I imagined, the world being old and creaky, ill-fitting too, that a crack existed between the two days. Anyone who was thin enough might slip through! I, certainly, was thin enough. I slipped through. . . . I entered a region out of time, a region where everything came true. And the first thing I saw was a wondrous streaming vision of the wind, the wind that howled outside my filthy windows. . . . I *saw* the winds, changing colours as they rose and fell, attached to the trees, in tenuous ribands of gold and blue and scarlet as they swept to and fro. . . . I little dreamed that these fancies would appear fifteen years later in a book of my own, "The Education of Uncle Paul." That crack, at any rate, became for me, like the fiddle, a means of escape from unkind reality into a state of inner bliss and wonder "where everything came true." . . .

It was after twelve o'clock next day when Boyde returned—with a black eye, my one thick suit stained and soiled, and a long involved story that utterly confused me. There had been a fight; he had protected a woman; a false charge had been laid against him owing to misunderstanding, owing also to the fact that he had no money to tip the policeman, and he had spent the night in a cell at Jefferson Market police station. In the morning the magistrate had discharged him with many compliments upon his "gallantry and courage." It did not ring true. I knew the Tammany magistrates better than that. He contradicted himself too, in saying that a Mr. Beattie, a friend of his mother's, who occasionally gave him a little money she sent from England, had bailed him

out. He had been bailed out, discharged with compliments, had slept in a cell, and not been fined! I smelt spirits too. It all made me miserable.

"You've been drunk and they locked you up," I reproached him. "Why do you lie to me?" The copious explanations that followed I hardly listened to. I lay in bed, saying nothing, but the warning of my visitor came back.

"I went down to the *Evening Sun*," Boyde said presently, when my silence made his explanations end of their own accord. "I've just come back with this. McCloy asked after you and sent it on account of the French stories." He handed me five dollars, in single bills, which we divided equally then and there.

He had been gone hardly ten minutes when the door opened again, and another visitor came in, an actor out of a job, Grant, an Englishman of perhaps twenty-five, one of the cricket team I had met in Staten Island a few weeks before. He had run across Boyde, he explained, and had heard I was ill. As one Englishman to another "in this awful city" he wanted to see if he could help in any way. He did then a wonderful thing. We had met but once, he scarcely knew me, he might never see me again, but when he realized the state of affairs he said he thought he could get a little money for me, and before I could say a word he vanished from the room. His shyness, his lame manner of speech, something hesitating and awkward about him generally, had embarrassed me as much as, evidently, he was embarrassed himself; and I was convinced his plea of getting money was only an excuse to disappear quickly. I rather hoped it was; certainly I thought it unlikely he would come back—which, nevertheless, he did, in about a quarter of an hour. He came in breathlessly, a shamefaced air about him; flung down some dollar bills on the bed, and vanished the second time. Three dollars lay on the counterpane. It was only a little later, as reflection brought up details, that I remembered he had worn an overcoat when he first came in, and that on his second visit he wore none. He had pawned it. Another

detail rose to the surface: that he had called, really, upon quite another errand, and that there was something he wanted to tell me that he had not the courage to put into words. Later he admitted it was true. . . .

Anticipating Otto Huebner's visits was now a keen pleasure; the one event of a long weary day.

During the next fortnight or so, he missed no single afternoon. His moods varied amazingly. One day he seemed an angel, the next a devil. I was completely puzzled.

The talks we had on his good days were an enjoyment I can hardly describe. I realized how much I depended on them, as well as on the man who made them possible. I realized also how much I depended on my other friend —on Boyde. The latter's curious and unsatisfactory behaviour, mysterious still to my blind ignorant eyes, made no difference to my feelings for him, but, if anything, tended to strengthen the attachment. My affection deepened. There lay now a certain pity in me too, an odd feeling that he was in my charge, and that, for all his greater knowledge and experience of life, his seniority as well, I could—I must—somehow help him. Upon the German doctor and Boyde, at any rate, Kay being far away, my mind rested with security, if of different degrees. To lose either of them in my lonely situation would have been catastrophic.

The old German would settle himself on the sofa, drawn up close to the bed, and talk. He was saturated in his native philosophy, but Hegel was his king. . . . "Sartor Resartus" enthralled him. Of De Quincey's struggle against opium he was never tired. Of Vedantic and Hindu philosophy, too, he was understanding and tolerant, though not enamoured. Regarding me still as a "specimen" evidently, he also treated me as though I were a boy, discerning of course at once my emptiness of mind and experience.

How patiently he listened to my eager exposition of life's mysteries, my chaotic theories, my fanciful speculations. . . .

"We *know*—nothing, you must remember. *Nothing*," he would say with emphasis. "Nor can we know anything, *ever*. We label, classify, examine certain *results*—that's all. Of causes we remain completely ignorant. Speculation is not proof. The fact that a theory fits all the facts gets us no further."

He smiled, but with close attention, while I plunged again into a description of my beliefs. The tobacco smoke curled up about his genial face. I had no fear of him in this mood. I could say all my thoughts without shyness. I made full confession.

"Interesting, logical, possibly true," he replied, "and most certainly as good an explanation as any other, better even than most, but"—he shrugged his shoulders—"always a theory only, and nothing else. There is no proof of anything. The higher states of consciousness you mention are nebulous, probably pathogenic. Those who experience them cannot, in any case, report their content intelligibly to us who have not experienced them—because no words exist. They are of no value to the race, and that condemns them. Men of action, not dreamers, are what the world needs."

"Men of action only carry out what has first been dreamed," I ventured.

"True," replied the old man, "true very often. Men of action rarely have much vision. The poet is the highest type . . . I am with you in this too—that the only *real* knowledge is the knowledge of man, the study of consciousness. *Gnothi seauton* is still the shortest, as well as the most pregnant, sermon in the world. Before we can get new knowledge, *different* knowledge—yes, there I am with you—consciousness itself must change and become different first . . . . *but* . . . . the people who get that *different* knowledge cannot describe it to us because there is no language." Wise, thoughtful things the old man said, while I listened eagerly. "One thing is certain," he declared with his usual emphasis: "If there is another state after the destruction of the body, it cannot be merely an extension, an idealization, of the one we know. *That*

is excluded. Without senses, without brain or nerves, without physical reactions of any kind—since there is no body—how shall we be aware of things about us? Another state can only be—*different*, yet so different that it is useless to talk of it. The Heaven of the spiritualists, the elaborate constructions of a Swedenborg, are nothing but coloured idealizations of the state we already know . . . ."—he snorted contemptuously—"obviously self-created. A different state of consciousness would show us a universe so totally different from anything we know that it must be—indescribable."

Of my own future, too, he liked to talk. The newspaper reporting he disapproved; it could lead to little; it was "*unerspreehlich gemein*"; the New York press was a cesspool; it might serve a temporary purpose, but no self-respecting man should stay too long in it. He urged me to become a doctor, saying I should be a success, advising me to specialize in nerves and mental cases. Being an Englishman would help very much; in time I should have an enormous practice; he would assist me in all manner of ways, so that my course need not be longer than two years, or three at the most. He would coach me, rush me through in half the normal time. Later I could get a foreign degree, which would be an additional asset. . . . He never tired of this topic, and his enthusiasm was certainly sincere.

Of stars, too, he loved to talk, of space, of possible other dimensions even. His exposition of a fourth dimension always delighted me. That the universe, indeed, was really four-dimensional, and that all we perceived of it was that sectional aspect, a portion as it were, that is projected into our three-dimensional world, was a theme that positively made him red in the face, as his big eyes focused on me, his concentrated mind working vehemently behind them. . . . Certainly, my knowledge of German improved considerably.

Then, as Boyde came in, the light would die out of his eyes, his face would harden and grow dark—he had a way of making it seem frozen—and with a stiff bow to Boyde that

only just acknowledged his presence, he would get up and leave the room.

Meanwhile, I sold two more French stories, and Boyde bought back the ten dollars paid for them; three others were "not suitable," according to McCloy. I told the doctor all I earned. "Later," he said, "you pay me, if you want to. I take nothing—now."

CHAPTER XVI

THE days passed; I grew slowly better; the wound still had to be drained and bandaged, and the doctor kept me to my bed. Kay, writing from Toronto, had contrived to send us ten dollars. More French translations had gone to McCloy, but only one or two had been used.

If the loneliness of the long days was dismal, the feverish nights were worse. I knew my few books by heart; Shelley and the "Gita" were indeed inexhaustible, but I longed for something new. To play the fiddle was too tiring. There was endless time for reflection . . . and, thank heaven, through the two dirty windows I could watch the sky. Many a story I published fifteen years later had its germ in the apparently dead moments of those wearisome hours, although at the time it never once occurred to me to try and write, not even the desire being in me.

It was the interminable nights that were most haunted. In the daylight there was colour in the changing clouds and sky, a touch of pink, a flame of sunset gold that opened the narrow crack through which I slipped into some strange interior state of happiness. There were the visits of the beloved, mysterious doctor, too. But the night was otherwise. The gas I left burning till Boyde woke and turned it out in the morning, made it impossible to see the stars. I could never settle down until he was comfortably asleep beside me. He kept late hours always. I reproached and scolded, yet in the end I always forgave. It was a comfort to know him within reach of my hand, while at the same time I dreaded his coming. My mixed feelings had reached that stage—I feared his coming and yet longed for it.

I lay waiting, listening for his step. Far below I

would hear it, down in the well of the sleeping house, even on the first flight of stairs. It mounted, mounted, stealthy, cautious, coming nearer and nearer, but always at the same steady pace. It never hastened. As it approached, rising through the stillness of the night, my heart would begin to beat; I dreaded the moment when our landing would be reached, still more the actual opening of our door. I listened, smothering my breath, trying to lessen the loud thumping against my ribs. The steps *might* not be his, after all; it might be someone else; that stealthy tread might pass my door without opening it and go upstairs. Then, when at last the handle rattled faintly, the door opened, and I saw him slowly enter, carrying his boots in his hand, my first instinct always was to—scream. Then he would smile, the eye-glass would drop from his eye, he would begin his explanations and excuses, and my dread soon evaporated in the friendliest of intimate talk.

So well, at last, did I learn to recognize his approach, that I knew the moment he opened the front door three flights below. The sound of the handle with its clink of metal, the dull thud as the big thing closed—I was never once mistaken. In my fitful snatches of sleep these sounds stole in, shaping my dreams, determining both cause and climax of incessant nightmares which, drawing upon present things and recent memories, and invariably including the personality of Boyde, made those waiting hours a recurrent horror. I would fight in vain to keep awake. Only when he was safely asleep at my side did the nightmares cease.

I had once seen Dixon, a Toronto photographer, walk across the Niagara river, just below the Falls; he used Blondin's old tight-rope; he lay down on his back half way over, turned round, knelt, hovered on one foot, using an immense balancing pole. Thousands watched him from both shores on a day of baking sunshine; his background was the massive main waterfall, slowly rolling down and over; below him swirled and boiled the awful rapids. Dixon now came walking, walking in my

dream again. I could hear his soft tread as his stockinged feet gripped the cable that swayed slightly as it sagged to the centre half way across. The sound, the figure came nearer; it came at me; it—was not Dixon after all. It was Boyde. . . . Then, as he moved with slow, creeping tread, nearer, ever nearer, I perceived suddenly that the rope was gone. There was no rope. He walked on empty air towards me—towards—*me*. I was appalled, speechless, paralyzed. That figure walking on space, walking towards me, walking remorselessly nearer was terrible . . . . The next second the door opened and Boyde stood peering at me round the edge, his boots in his hands.

One morning, tired of learning the "Witch of Islam" by heart, I leaned over the bed, and something in the waste-paper basket close beside it caught my eye; a scrap of coloured paper—several scraps—pink. Looking nearer, I saw it was a torn-up cheque. Without any particular interest at first I stared at the unfamiliar thing, wondering vaguely how it came to be there. Only after this casual inspection did it occur to me as being rather odd. A cheque! What was it? Whose was it? How did it come to be there, torn up in *my* waste-paper basket? It was a long time since I had seen such a thing as a cheque; and idly, with no more curiosity than this, I lay gazing at the scraps of coloured paper.

The basket lay within easy reach; I stretched out an arm and picked it up; I emptied the contents on the white counterpane; I sorted out the coloured scraps from among the general litter. The scraps were small, and the puzzle amused me. It was a long business. Bit by bit the cheque took shape. The word "Toronto" was the first detail that caught my attention closer. Presently, fitting three tiny scraps together, I saw to my surprise a name in full—Arthur Glyn Boyde. Another little group made "Kay." A third read "Seventy Five Dollars." My interest increased with every moment, till at last the complete cheque lay pieced together before my eyes.

It was drawn by Kay on my old Toronto bank for the

sum mentioned, and it was payable to Boyde. The date was—three days before.

I lay and stared at it in blank bewilderment. Fitting the scraps together on the counterpane was nothing compared to my difficulty in fitting the pieces together in my mind. I could make neither head nor tail of it. Kay had, indeed, been acting in Toronto on the date given, but—a bank account. . . . ! And why was the cheque torn up? It must have been delivered with a letter—yesterday. Boyde had not mentioned it. I felt as confused as though it were a problem in arithmetic; but a problem in arithmetic would not have stirred the feeling of pain and dread that rose in me. Something I had long feared and hated, had deliberately hidden from myself, had cloaked and draped so that I need not recognize it, now at last stared me in the face.

The chief item in the puzzle, however, remained. That it was not Kay's real signature, I saw plainly, it was a reasonably good copy; but why was the cheque torn up? It had been taken from my old book in the packing-case downstairs, of course; but why was it destroyed? A forgery! The word terrified me.

It was while trying to find the meaning that my fingers played with the rest of the littered paper . . . and presently pieced together a letter in the same writing as the signature; a letter, written from Toronto, with Islington Jersey Dairy as address, and bearing the same date as the cheque—a letter from Kay to Boyde. It had been also torn into little bits.

"Dear B.," it ran, "I am awfully sorry to hear poor Blackwood is so ill still, and that he has no money. I enclose my cheque for $75 to help him out, but, for God's sake, see that he doesn't waste it in dissipation, as he did the last I sent. I know I can trust you in this" . . . . A page and a half of news followed. A postscript came at the end: "Better not let him know how much I've sent. I'll send another cheque later if you let me know it's really needed."

With these two documents spread on the counterpane

before me, I lay back thinking, thinking, while an icy feeling spread slowly over me that for a long time made clear thought impossible. The word "dissipation" made me smile, but all I knew in those first moments was an aching, dull emotion, shot through from time to time by stabs of keenest pain. There was horror too, there was anger, pity . . . as, one by one, recent events dropped the masks I had so deliberately pinned on them. These thin disguises that too sanguine self-deception had helped me to lay over a hideousness that hurt and frightened me, fell one by one. My anger passed; horror and pity remained. I cannot explain it quite; an intense sorrow, an equally intense desire to help and save, were in me. Affection, no doubt, was deep and real. . . .

At the same time, the shock numbed something in me; the abrupt collapse of a friendship that meant so much to my loneliness bowled me over. What exactly had happened I did not know, I could not understand; treachery, falsity, double-dealing, lies—these were obvious, but the *modus operandi* was not clear. Why was the cheque torn up and so carelessly flung away? There was a mist of confusion over my mind. I thought over my police court experience, the criminal tricks and practices I already knew, but these threw no helpful light. Was Kay, too, involved? Did the warning of a few weeks ago include him as well? There had been forgery, yet again—why was the cheque torn up? The mystery of it all increased the growing sense of dread, of fear, of creeping horror. My newspaper work had given me the general feeling that everyone had his price . . . but between friends in adversity, Englishmen, gentlemen as well . . . was it then true literally of *everybody?*

After a time I collected the two documents and pieced them together again between the pages of a book, lest someone might enter and discover them. The doctor was not coming that day, but there might be other visitors. Then it suddenly dawned on me—why hadn't this occurred to me before?—that the whole thing must be a joke after all. Of course . . . why not? It might even have

something to do with the rôle of understudy in the Sothern Play. It could easily be—oh, surely!—a bit of stupid fun on Kay's part. The carelessness too! Throwing the scraps in the basket under my very nose, where anybody could easily see them, where Mrs. Bernstein might find them, or the woman who came in twice a week to do the room. This was certainly against criminal intent.

The most far-fetched explanations poured through my mind, invited by hope, dressed up by eager desire, then left hanging in mid-air, with not the faintest probability to support them. I deliberately recalled the kind actions, the solicitude, the sharing of receipts, a thousand favourable details, even to the innocent expression and the frank blue eyes, only to find these routed utterly by two other details; one negative, one vague, yet both insistent; the doctor's silence and the shadow noticed recently on the sleeping face.

It was eleven o'clock; Boyde had said he would return about four; I expected him, for the doctor, whom he avoided, was not coming. There were five hours of waiting to endure first.

The situation which another might have tossed aside with a wry laugh at himself for having been a guileless fool, to me seemed portentous with pain and horror.

I had no plan, however, when the door opened at half-past three, long before I expected it. There was in me no faintest idea of what I was going to say or do. The book lay on my knee, with the documents concealed between the pages. I had heard no footstep, the rattle of the handle was the first sound I caught. Yet the door opened differently—not quite as Boyde opened it. There was hesitation in the movement. In that hesitation of a mere second there again flashed across my mind a sudden happy certainty; the documents could be explained, it was all a joke somewhere. He had done nothing wrong, he would clear up the whole thing in a moment! Of course! It was my weak, feverish condition that had raised a bogey. A few words from him were now going to destroy it.

Then, instead of Boyde, I saw Grant standing shyly on the threshold, the young actor who had pawned his overcoat. This time he wore it.

The relief I felt at seeing him betrayed me to myself.

I welcomed him so heartily that his shyness disappeared. He had dropped in by chance, he told me. I gave him an account of my discovery, and he bent over me to see the cheque and letter, asking if the writing was really Kay's. He looked very grave.

"It's not unlike it, but it isn't his," I replied. "What do you make of it? Why are they torn up?" I was burning to hear what he thought.

He did not answer for a moment. He asked instead a number of questions about Boyde, listening closely to my account of him, which mentioned the good with the bad. He went down to examine the packing-case and returned with the report that my cheque-book was not there. I asked him again what he made of it all, waiting with nervous anxiety for his verdict, but again he put me off. He wanted to know when I last heard from Kay. Eight days ago, I told him, from Toronto. He asked numerous questions. He seemed as puzzled as I was.

"What do you think it means?" I begged. "What's he been doing?"

"Are you *quite* positive it's not Kay's writing," he urged, "even, for instance, if he was—" he hesitated—"a bit tight at the time?"

I clung to the faint hope. "Well, of course—I really couldn't say. I've never seen his writing when he was tight. I suppose——"

"Because if it isn't," interrupted Grant decisively, "it means that Boyde has been getting money from him and using it for himself."

I realized then that he was trying to make things less grave than they really were, trying to make it easier for me in the best way he could. The torn-up cheque proved his suggestion foolish.

"Do you think he's an absolute scoundrel?" I

asked point blank, unable to bear the suspense any longer. "Really a criminal—is he?"

"I wanted to tell you the other day," he said quickly. "Only you were too ill. I thought it would upset you."

"Criminal? Tell me at once. He may be in any minute. I must know."

"His reputation is bad," was the reply, "as bad as it could be. I've heard things about him. He's already been in gaol. He's supposed to be a bit dangerous."

I was listening for the sound of a step on the stairs. I lowered my voice a little. It was clear to me that Grant did not want to tell me all he knew.

"So—what do you make, then, of this?" I asked in a half whisper, pointing to the documents.

He looked at me hard a moment, then gave his reply, also in an undertone:

"Practising—I think."

I did not understand him. The uncertainty of his meaning, the queer suggestion in the word he used, gave my imagination a horrid twist. I asked again, my heart banging against my ribs:

"Practising—what?"

"He didn't think it a successful—copy—so he tore it up," Grant explained.

"You mean—forgery?"

"I think so. That is—I'm afraid so."

I think the universe changed for me in that moment; something I had been standing on for years collapsed; I was left hanging in space without a platform, without a rudder. An odd helplessness came over me. Grant, of course, had only confirmed my own suspicions, had merely put into words what, actually, I had known for a long time; but it was just this hearing the verdict spoken by another that hurt so abominably. Grant had quietly torn off me the last veil of self-deception. I could no longer pretend to myself. It seems absurdly out of proportion now on looking back; at the time the shock was appalling.

We talked together, we tried to devise some plan of

action, we reached no settled conclusion. The minutes passed. I never ceased listening for the familiar footstep on the stairs. Of one thing only was I perfectly sure: whatever happened, I intended to take charge of it all myself. I would deal with Boyde in my own way. The principle lay clear and decided in me; I meant to frighten Boyde as severely as I possibly could, then to give him another chance. Anticipation made the minutes crawl. Grant talked a good deal.

"He spotted you and Kay from the start," I heard Grant saying. "He saw your ignorance of the town, your inexperience, your generosity. He felt sure of free lodging anyhow, perhaps a good deal more——"

A faint thud sounded from downstairs.

"There he is," I said instantly. "That's the front door banging. He's coming. Keep quiet."

I told Grant to get into the cupboard and hide. He was only just concealed in the deep cupboard and the door drawn to, when the other door opened quietly and Boyde came in.

CHAPTER XVII

BOYDE was in cheerful, smiling mood. He put some grapes on the bed, asked how I felt, and told me about his trip to Patterson and his failure to get the organist job. "It's bitterly cold," he said. "I *was* glad of your overcoat. You *have* been a brick," he added, "but I'll make it all up to you when my luck turns." He crossed over to the sofa and sat down, stretching himself, obviously tired out.

"Never mind, old chap; we shall get along somehow. Probably Kay will send us something more before long. He's always faithful. Let's see," I went on casually, "when was it we heard from him last?"

"A week ago," said Boyde quite naturally. "Toronto, wasn't it? Or Buffalo—no, no, Toronto."

We laughed together. "So it was," I agreed carelessly. Then I pretended to hesitate. "But that was nearly a fortnight ago," I suddenly corrected my memory; "surely we've heard since that. Only the other day—or did I dream it?"

Boyde stared at me lazily through the cigarette smoke. "No, I think not," he said quietly. "There was only the one letter." He showed no sign of disturbance.

I lay still, pretending to think back a bit, then heaved myself slowly up in bed.

"But, Boyde, I remember the letter," I exclaimed with conviction, staring into his face, "I'm certain I do—another letter. Why, of course! I remember your showing it to me. There was a cheque in it—a cheque for seventy-five dollars!"

His easy laugh, his voice and manner, the perfect naturalness of his reply made me feel sure that I was in the wrong. He knew absolutely nothing of the cheque

and letter. He was innocent. It was not *his* doing, at any rate.

"You must have been dreaming," he said, looking me full in the face with his big, honest blue eyes. "It's too good to be true." He gave a wry little chuckle that only a clear conscience could have made possible.

I lay back in bed and laughed with him, partly from weakness, partly to hide my shaking, which I was terrified he would notice. I changed the subject a moment later, as he said nothing more; then, still acting on impulse and with no preconceived plan or idea of my next move, I sat bolt upright in bed and fixed him with my eyes. I assumed a very convinced and serious tone. I felt serious and convinced. The mood of horror had rushed suddenly up in me:

"Boyde, I remember it all now." I spoke with great emphasis. "It was not a dream at all. You came to this bedside and showed me the letter. You held it out for me to read. It was dated from my old Toronto Dairy three days ago. *You showed me the cheque too.* It was for seventy-five dollars, signed by Kay, and made out to your order. I remember every single detail of it suddenly. And—*so do you.*"

He gazed at me as a little child might gaze. He made no movement. His eyes neither dropped nor flinched. He merely gazed—with a puzzled, innocent, guileless stare. A pained expression then stole across his face.

"Blackwood, what on earth do you mean? It's not likely I should forget it if seventy-five dollars came, is it?" he went on quickly in his most sympathetic voice, an aggrieved note in it that stirred all my affection instantly. "The most he has sent so far is ten dollars. I should have given you the money at once. And *you know it*, Blackwood." He got up and walked quietly to and fro.

It was the way he uttered those last four words that sent ice down my spine and brought the mood of horror back. Why this was so, I cannot explain. Perhaps the phrase rang false; perhaps its over-emphasis failed. I

only know that my hesitation vanished. That prepared plan so strangely matured, yet hidden so deeply that it emerged only step by step as it was needed, pushed up another move into my upper mind.

I got slowly out of bed. Perspiration broke out all over me. I felt very weak. The wound stretched. Straight before me, a long way off it seemed, was the sofa. Boyde stood watching my every move. He stood like a statue.

Before I had taken a couple of slow, small steps, crawling round the edge of the bed, he did two quick things that in a flash brought final conviction to me, so that I knew beyond any doubt the hideous thing was true: he moved suddenly across the room, passing in front of me, though not near enough to touch; three rapid strides and he was against the window—with his back to the light. It was dusk. He wished to conceal his face from me. His left arm hung at his side, the hand on a level with the dressing-table, and I saw his fingers feeling along its surface, though his eyes never left my own. I saw them find, then grip, the white-handled razor, and pull it slowly towards him. These were the two things that betrayed him, but chiefly, I think, the first of them—concealing his face.

At the same instant there was a faint sound on my left. I had completely forgotten the existence of my visitor; I now remembered him, for that sound came from inside the cupboard, and Grant, evidently, was ready to leap out. But I did not want Grant. I intended the whole matter to be between Boyde and myself. A flash of understanding had given me complete assurance. Boyde, I now knew, was a coward, a sneak, a cheat, a liar, and worse besides. In spite of my physical weakness I had the upper hand. I was about to give him the fright of his life, though still with no clear idea exactly how this was to be accomplished. All I knew was that I meant to terrify him, then forgive—and save him from himself.

"Not yet!" I called out, yet so quickly, and with so little apparent meaning, that Boyde, I think, hardly heard

me, and certainly did not understand. Grant, however, understood. He told me later it was just in time to prevent his coming out.

With one hand supporting me on the edge of the dressing-table, I was now close to Boyde, bent double in front of him, staring up into his eyes.

"Give me that razor," I said, and he obeyed, as I felt sure he would. That is, his fingers moved away from it, and I quickly pushed it out of his reach. With my other hand I seized his arm. I raised my face to his as much as my wound allowed.

"Boyde," I said, "I know *everything!*"

If I expected a collapse, as I think was the case, I was disappointed. Nothing happened. He did not move. Not a muscle, not even an eyelash flickered. He stared down into my upturned face without a word, waiting for what was coming; control of the features, of mouth and eyes in particular, was absolute. And it was this silence, this calm assurance, giving me no help, even making it more difficult for me, that, I think, combined to set me going. I was fairly wound up; I saw red. The words poured out, hot, bitter, scathing.

The moment I ended, he smiled, as he said very quietly:

"I don't know *what* you're talking about. You are fearfully excited and you will regret your words. I do wish you would get back into bed. All this is awfully bad for you in your weak condition."

I was flabbergasted. All the wind had been taken from my sails. A touch would have sent me to the floor, but he did not touch me. He merely gazed into my face with an air of calm patience that had pity in it, a hint even of contempt.

There was a little silence after he had spoken. For a moment I had no notion what to do or say. Then, quite suddenly, up flashed my plan. I was less excited now, my voice was well under control.

"Boyde," I said, "now, at last, I've caught you in a worse thing still. You have forged a letter and a signa-

ture. You have forged a cheque as well. And you will have to go to prison for it. There is a headquarters detective outside waiting for me to call him in. You are going to be arrested."

There was a moment of taut suspense I can never forget. He stared down at me, obviously at first incredulous. A slight twitch ran across his face, nothing more; beyond a trifling extra bend of the head, he made no movement. He was judging me, weighing my words, wondering if they were true. The next second I saw that he believed me.

What happened then to his face I had never seen before, though I was often to see it afterwards in other faces during my criminal experience. The skin slowly blanched to the hue of flour; the cheeks sagged; the mouth opened; the look in his eyes was dreadful. The whole face disintegrated, as it were. He had the air of a hunted animal at bay. At the same time there was a convulsive movement of his entire body that frightened me. I did not know what he was going to do. It was really made up of several movements, one starting after another. First, his knees gave way and he nearly collapsed. Then, evidently, he considered the possibility of knocking me down and dashing out of the room. His eyes ran swiftly over everything at once, it seemed, noticing the razor certainly, but finding me awkwardly between him and the end of the table where it lay. He half turned in the direction of the window behind him, thinking doubtless of escape by the leads outside. He gave finally a sort of lurch towards me, but this I did not actually see, for I had turned away and was crawling painfully over to the door. It was Grant who supplied this detail of description later. His idea, probably, was to knock me down and make a bolt for it. But, whatever it was he really intended to do, in the end he did nothing, for at this second Grant emerged suddenly from his cupboard.

I was already leaning with my back against the door and caught the look of terror and blank amazement that came into Boyde's face, as he saw another man whom he

certainly took at first for the detective. He stood stock still like a petrified figure. A moment later he recognized him as the Englishman he had met at the cricket match. He subsided backwards, half on to the window-sill and half against the dressing-table. The drama of the scene suddenly occurred to me for the first time, as I watched Grant walk over and put the razor in his pocket, and then sit down quietly on the sofa. He spoke no single word. He merely sat and watched.

With my back against the door I then went on talking quickly. Yet behind my anger and disgust, I felt the old pity surge up; already I was sorry for him; I would presently forgive him. But, first, there was something else to be done. The plan lay quite clear in my mind.

Closely watched by Grant and myself, Boyde had meanwhile moved out into the room, still without speaking a single word, and flung himself on the bed where he began to cry like a child. He sobbed convulsively, though whether the tears were of sorrow or of fear, I could not tell. We watched him for some time in silence. It was some minutes later that he sat up, still shaking with sobs, and tried to speak. In an utterly broken voice he begged for mercy, not for himself—he swore he didn't "care a damn" about his "worthless self"—but for his mother's sake. It would break her heart, if she heard about it; it would kill her. He implored me for another chance. His flow of words never ceased. If I would let him off this time, he begged, he would do anything I wished, anything, anything in the world. He would leave New York, he would go home and enlist . . . but forgery meant years in gaol. "I am only thirty, and the sentence would mean the end of my life. . . ."

Perhaps instinct warned me he was lying, perhaps he over-acted, I cannot say; but the entire scene, the sobs, the impassioned language, the anguish in the broken voice, the ruin of the face I had once thought innocent, all left me without emotion. I was exhausted too. I had witnessed similar scenes between detectives and their

prisoners, the former not only unmoved, but bored and even angry. I understood now how they felt. But there was the balance of my plan to be carried out; my original principle had never wavered; I believed the terror he had felt would make him run straight in future; the moment had now come, I thought, to tell him he was forgiven. So I left the door—he screamed, thinking I was going to open it—and crawled slowly over to him. Putting my hand on his shoulder, and using the gentlest, kindest voice I could find, I told him he should have another chance, but only one. All excitement had died out of me, I felt real pity, the old affection rose, I urged and begged him to "run straight" from this moment. . . .

"But—there is a condition," I finished my sermon.

"Anything, Blackwood. I'll do anything you say." The tears were still hanging on his cheeks.

"You will sit down and write what I dictate."

We found a sheet of foolscap, and he sat down at the little desk, while I stood over him and dictated the words of a full confession. In writing it, Boyde's hand was as steady as that of a clerk making an unimportant entry in an office book. He came to the end and looked up at me enquiringly.

"Now write a duplicate," I said, "in your other handwriting, the one you meant to be a copy of Kay's."

He did this too; to an inexperienced eye the difference was extraordinary. I asked Grant to witness it with me, and when this was finished I waved the document in the other's face. "I shall keep this," I told him gravely, "and if ever you go wrong again, it will mean twenty years in prison." I do not think he knew what I knew at that moment; *viz.* that a confession signed "under duress" was not evidence in a court of law. He said very simply, gazing into my eyes: "You've saved my life, Blackwood. I shall never forget this day. My temptations have been awful, but from this moment I mean to run straight, perfectly straight." Words of gratitude followed in a flood. He shook my hand, begging to be allowed to help me back into bed.

"I must first tell the detective I've withdrawn the charge," I said. "I must send him away. He doesn't know your name." Boyde thanked me volubly again, as I crawled to the door, closed it again, and stood in the cold passage a minute or two. "The man's gone," I said, when I came back.

"When—when am I to leave this room?" he asked quietly. I told him he could stay. The matter was forgiven and forgotten. He began to cry again. . . .

For some time after Grant had gone, we were alone. Boyde talked a little, repeating his gratitude. I asked him one question only: had he been in gaol before? "I would rather not answer that, if you don't mind," he said. I did not press him, for he had answered it. "I shall never, never go wrong again," he kept repeating. And all the time he talked—I learned this later—there lay in his coat pocket, that was my coat pocket, the sum of ten dollars which belonged to me. He had sold two of my translations to McCloy, telling me McCloy had refused them.

I have a vague recollection of that evening and of our talk, for complete exhaustion had come over me from the moment I got back into bed. It was not unconsciousness, but probably half unconsciousness. I was only dimly aware of what was going on. I remember Boyde going out to eat something at Krisch's, then coming back. I woke in darkness with a sudden start. The gas was out, and I wondered why. There was a noise close beside me—something swishing. My mind cleared in a flash.

"Put it back, Boyde," I called out. "Put it back at once."

A thin summer coat hung on the door, too thin and shabby to wear, too ragged to pawn. I had placed the confession in the inside pocket, and it was this coat I now heard swishing faintly against the wood.

No answer came, but I plainly heard the soft tread of bare feet along the carpet. I got up and lit the gas. Boyde lay apparently sleeping soundly on the floor.

I noticed how well-nourished his body looked. *He*, at any rate, had not been starving. Then I moved to the door, found the confession, took it out, and crawled back into bed. From that moment the paper never left me; it was with me when later the doctor allowed me out, and at night it lay under my pillow while I slept. I kept the torn scraps of the cheque and letter with it, and I hid the razor. Boyde never shaved himself in that room again.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE episode, though far from being finished, had a shattering effect upon me. If a friend, so close to me by ties of affection and gratitude, could act like this, how would others, less intimately related, behave? My trust in people was killed. A sense of deep loneliness was added to the other miseries of that bed.

Only my books comforted and helped . . . they did not fail . . . their teachings stood stiff and firm like a steel rod that never bent or shifted, much less broke. Since these notes tell merely the superficial episodes of my early years, further mention of what the books meant to me is unnecessary; enough—more than enough, probably—has already been told to show the background which explains motive and conduct. The main stream of my life, at any rate, ran deeper and ever deeper, its centre of gravity far below anything that could possibly come to me in the ordinary world or outward happenings. Big dreams were in me at white heat, burning, burning . . . and all external events were coloured by them.

There followed now a more peaceful though short period, during which Boyde behaved well, with kindness and signs of true penitence. Grant warned me this was acting, and that I had been a fool to forgive and let him stay on, but I would not listen, and followed my own principle. I did not trust him, but never let him know it, showing him full confidence, with all the former intimacy and affection. I felt sure this was the right and only way. His attitude to me had something of a dog's devotion in it. I fully believed he was "running straight" again. I watched him closely, while hiding suspicion carefully away.

November drew to a close; Kay sent no more money; the debt to Mrs. Bernstein grew; income became smaller

and smaller. I wrote to McCloy, who replied with a brief word that I could come back when I was well again.

Before leaving my bed, however, at the end of the month, another incident occurred that shocked me far more than the first.

One afternoon about a week after the confession, there came a knock at the door, and to my complete surprise, in walked a banker, who had often stayed in our house in England. I was startled and annoyed, for I feared he would write home and tell the truth that my letters so carefully concealed. It was a couple of years since I had seen him. How had he found me out? His first sentence told me: "But this is dreadful. I knew nothing about your being ill. I didn't know you were in New York even. An Englishman named Boyde came to my office yesterday and told me." He looked me over with anxiety. "But your bones are showing! Have you been very bad? Why on earth didn't you let me know, my dear fellow?"

I had spoken of this acquaintance in Boyde's presence, and he had evidently made a note of name and address. I explained quickly that I had not been seriously ill, that I was nearly well and had a good doctor, and that I was on the staff of the *Evening Sun* and doing well. I told him briefly about my Canadian career as well. The banker was a very decent fellow. His visit was brief, but he was very kind, well-meaning and sympathetic—only—I did not want him! He promised, anyhow, he would not write to my father—was glad, I think, to be relieved of the necessity—and before going he absolutely insisted on leaving some money with me. I refused and refused again. But my own exhaustion and his persistence resulted in his leaving all he had on him at the moment—$32. Months later I discovered that Boyde had obtained other sums from him on the plea that I needed a specialist, and there may have been yet further amounts of similar kind for all I knew.

On coming in, Boyde took his scolding with a smile; he had "acted for the best. . . ." We discussed how the

money should be spent, agreeing upon $10 to Mrs. Bernstein, $10 to the doctor next day, $3 to redeem Kay's overcoat, which we would send to him, and the balance in hand, after laying in a store of dried apples, oatmeal and condensed milk, as our supplies were now exhausted. Next morning, when he left at eight o'clock for a studio appointment and choir rehearsal, I gave him the money for the landlady and a dollar he asked for himself. The balance he put back in the drawer of the little desk beside my bed.

It was a happier morning than I had known for long; the feeling that I had something to give to the doctor made the hours pass quickly, and when he arrived at three, in his very best mood, he was obviously pleased on hearing that I could easily spare $10. The relief was written on his beaming face. He thanked me warmly. "I do really need it," he said with emphasis, "or I couldn't take it from you." We passed a delightful hour or two; I was strong enough to play the fiddle to him; we talked . . . the happiest afternoon I had yet known in that room came to an end; he prepared to go. Pointing to the drawer, I asked him to take the money out. He did so. At least he opened the drawer. He opened all four drawers. The money was not there.

The most painful part of it, I think, was the look on his face as he presently went out. He did not believe me. I had found it impossible to mention Boyde. I had been speechless. I had no explanation to give. By the expression on the old German's face as he left the room I could see he thought I was lying to him. His disappointment in me was greater than his disappointment over the money. It was a bitter moment—even more bitter than the further treachery of my companion. . . .

I was alone with my thoughts and feelings. I was alone for four days—and four nights. Boyde, that is, did not return till four days had passed, while the doctor stayed away three days. Whether either of them had said anything to Mrs. Bernstein on their way out, Boyde promising payment perhaps, the doctor letting fall something

derogatory, I did not know. Mrs. Bernstein, anyhow, was very unpleasant during those four awful days. Boyde had not even given her the $10. She paid me dreadful visits, she threatened to sell my things (what ? I wondered), to turn me out ; she sent up hardly any food. . . .

Waiting for Boyde's step, listening all day, all night . . . I needed my books, my dreams, my inner crack, as I had never needed them before during those horrible four days. They seemed an eternity. The long nights, of course, were by far the worse; the dreams, the expectancy, for ever anticipating the familiar tread of stockinged feet on the stairs, wondering what in the world had happened, how things would end. . . . Had he been arrested, perhaps for something terrible ? They were haunted nights that made me dread the first sign of coming dusk. It seemed like weeks, an incalculable time altogether had passed since I had seen him. . . . Then the spider took the place of the other vermin. I have always particularly disliked spiders, and this one was the father of them all ; though it was the horror of him, not the physical presence, that haunted my nights so persistently. He was, I am sure, the Spider Idea. He originated in a room in Toronto, where a friend foolishly let his prototype, a tarantula, escape, and where it hid all night. It was my room. He came from Florida with a case of bananas. He was very big, if sluggish, his swollen body and hairy black legs the nastiest I had ever seen. I spent the night with this monster on the loose, and the first thing in the morning I saw him, low down on the wall, quite close to me. He had crept for warmth to a pipe near the hot air register.

This spider now came at me, stirred into life by the chance activity of some memory cell. He came crawling across the leads, dragging his bulging body slowly, then feeling over the smooth glass with his legs that were like black brushes a chimney sweep might use. Up the stairs he came too, but sideways there, being too large to move in his usual way ; first three legs on one side, then three legs on the other, heaving himself along, the mass of his body between them sloping like a boat at sea. The fat

body was derived, I'm sure, from the shock of noticing Boyde's well-fed appearance. . . . There were other things besides the spider, the mind, doubtless, being a little overwrought.

One of these "other things" was real—a yellow-haired woman who aired what the papers called her "shapely legs" in silk tights for a living. Pauline M—— was her name, and she was leading lady in the "Night Owls Company," then playing at Tony Pastor's Music Hall in 14th Street, or, perhaps, it was at Koster and Biel's Hall further up town. I have forgotten. In any case, Boyde had mentioned the Company to me in some connexion or other. He knew her.

Her visit to me has always seemed vague and hazy; shrouded in mist of some kind, the mist of my suffering mind, I imagine. There lies a feverish touch of fantasy all over it. It was on the evening of the second day since Boyde had disappeared, though I could have sworn that at least a week's loneliness had intervened. It *was* the second day, I know, because the doctor came on the fourth. During the afternoon an unintelligible telegram had come, sent from a Broadway office: "*Don't be anxious—have surprising news for you—no drinking—home this afternoon.*——*B.*" There was not much comfort in it, though at least I knew then he had not been arrested, but an hour or so later a second telegram had arrived, sent from an office above 42nd Street: "*Married Pauline this afternoon.*——*B.*" It all mystified, confused and troubled me extremely, and the strain on nerves and emotions had been so prolonged that, I think, I was half stupefied with it all, half stupid certainly.

At any rate, the visit always seemed a sort of unreal visit, veiled as it were, and shadowy. Two thoughts were in my mind when the knock sounded on the door: food and Boyde. I was always listening intently for his tread, but I was also listening for Mrs. Bernstein's footstep with a possible tray. It was after six o'clock; since coffee and bread at 8.30 in the morning I had eaten nothing, for our own supplies were finished. Instead of Boyde or

the tray, however, in walked the woman with yellow hair and statuesque figure. She wore furs, she was overdressed and painted, she reeked of scent. To me it was a kind of nightmare vision.

Details of her long visit I remember but very few. She at once announced herself—"I am Pauline M——" and asked excitedly, "Are you Blackwood?" She was in a "state." Her great figure filled the little room. She poured out a torrent of words in a cockney voice. Her face was flaming red beneath the paint. Occasionally she swept about. The name of Boyde recurred frequently. She was attacking me, I gathered. Boyde had said this and that about me. I understood less than nothing. I remember asking her to sit down, and that she refused, and that presently I asked something else: "Has he married you?" and that she suddenly caught sight of the telegrams lying on my bed—I had pointed—then picked them up and read them. She came closer to me while she did this, so that I caught the stink of spirits.

It was all very muddled and confused to me, and I made no attempt to talk. I heard her begging me to "give him back" to her, that she loved him, that I had "poisoned his mind" against her—threats and beseeching oddly mingled. But the telegrams seemed to sober her a little, for I remember her becoming abruptly more quiet, almost maudlin, and pouring out an endless story about Boyde who was, apparently, "full of money . . . full of liquor" . . . and full of anger against me because *he* had been "supporting" me and I had shown "base ingratitude." . . . I was too bewildered to feel much. It numbed me. I couldn't make sense of it. I couldn't realize how Boyde had deliberately left me alone so long. Something monstrous and inhuman touched it all.

She went away eventually in a calmer state, though leaving me in a condition that was far from calm. She went, begging me to "send him back" to her when he came home, but half realizing, I gathered, that the boot was on the other leg, so far as Boyde and myself were

concerned. She was still angry with me in a vague unjust sort of way, not knowing whom to believe probably, nor exactly what had happened. She flounced out of the room in a whirl of excitement and cockney sentences, and I never saw her again. My tray arrived within a few minutes of her welcome departure. . . . I spent an appalling night. Boyde, the yellow-haired woman, Mrs. Bernstein, the old German, the spider, steps on the stairs a hundred times that came to nothing. . . . I wished once or twice that I were dead. . . . The door did not open. . . .

It never rains but it pours. Two days later the doctor came in the afternoon, in the blackest mood I had yet encountered. I rather expected his visit, and though dreading it, I also longed for it, longed to see someone —a human being. He came sharp at three, attended to me, and left again. The visit lasted perhaps ten or fifteen minutes, and during the whole time he spoke no single word, not even greeting me when he entered, or saying good-bye when he went out. His face was black, aged, terrible in the suffering it wore. I had meant to tell him at last about Boyde, unable any longer to keep it to myself. I simply *must* tell someone. But not a syllable could I get out. When the old German had gone, however, I felt sure it was his own mysterious suffering, and not any feeling against myself, that caused his strange behaviour. I knew, too, that he would come again, and thus I got some comfort from his silent, rapid visit. This was on the fourth day since Boyde deserted; it was the day on which he came back.

He came back; his money had given out; he had nowhere to sleep.

It was night, somewhere about ten o'clock. I was falling into an uneasy doze, the kind of doze that introduced the spider, when the door opened softly. There was no knock. I had heard no footstep. The door just opened and he came in.

Every nerve in me became alert. Truth to tell, there was no emotion in me of any sort or kind. I was numb,

exhausted to the bone. I lay still and stared at him. He looked sleek and even prosperous. He looked gorged with food. His face was a little swollen. The big blue eyes were clear. He let the eyeglass fall, gazing at me, while a smile broke over his face. I was so glad to see him, so relieved to have him back, that, though no emotion beyond that of suspense ended was in me, I felt, as once before with the doctor, a lump rise in my throat. His bloated expression distressed me vaguely. At first he said nothing, but walked across the room on tiptoe, as though pretending I was asleep and he feared to wake me.

My tongue loosened suddenly. The very words I have not forgotten. A matter that had not lain in my mind for days came uppermost:

"Did you send off the overcoat to Kay?"

He nodded, but without looking at me. It was a lie, I knew. My eyes followed him round, as he began to undress. For several minutes I said nothing. Then other words came to me:

"I've been alone four days and nights."

Silence.

"Without food—or anybody."

Silence, but he turned his back to me.

"Without money."

Silence. He stood quite motionless.

"I might have died. I might have gone crazy."

Silence.

"It's been awful—the loneliness and wondering——"

He half turned, but instantly turned back again. No sound escaped him.

"I've been thinking about you—and wondering day and night. Are you really married? Pauline's been here—this afternoon."

His silence was broken by a sort of gulp, and he bent over. My mistake about the date of the woman's visit was intentional—I thought it might open his lips; I did not correct it. He half turned to look at me, but again instantly hid his face as before. Then he abruptly sat down on the sofa, leaning against the back, his head in

his hands. I raised myself in bed, never taking my eyes off him.

"I got your telegrams. Have you nothing to say? No explanation? Have you brought any food, any money? You have had money—all this time."

Silence, broken only by another gulp.

"I saw you take the money out of the drawer. I said nothing because I thought you were going to get me things. I *trusted* you."

He turned all at once and faced me, though keeping his eyes always steadily on the floor. The tears were streaming down his face like rain.

"Are you tired?" I asked. "You'd better lie down and go to sleep. You can talk to-morrow."

It was this that finished him. He had reached the breaking point.

There is no heroism in me; it was simply that I needed him, rotten as he was, heartless, cruel, vile as well; I funked another spell of that awful loneliness; I knew him now for a coward and a beast, but I could not face another night alone. That complete loneliness had been too horrible. A wild animal was better than that. Boyde was of the hyena type, but a hyena was better than a spider. It was neither generosity nor nobility that made me listen to his ridiculous and lying story of an "awful and terrible temptation," of a "fearful experience with a woman" who had drugged him. . . . The tale spun itself far into the night, the razor and the confession were under my pillow, I fell asleep, dead with exhaustion, while he was still explaining something about a "woman named Pauline M——" who had "deceived me in a most extraordinary way. . . ."

The following day, in the morning—Dr. Huebner came unexpectedly. Boyde had gone out before I woke. This time he was a radiant Dr. Jekyll, and I told him the whole story. His only comment, looking severely at me through the big spectacles, was: "I expected it. He is a confidence man. I knew it the first time I saw him. You have kicked the devil out, of course?"

A violent disagreement that was almost a quarrel followed.

"I simply do not understand you," he said at last, in complete disgust. It was only the wondrous, beaming happy mood he was in that prevented his being really angry. He threw his hands up and snorted. "You are either a fool or a saint, and—I'm sure you're not a saint." He was very much upset.

I did not yield. There was something in me that persuaded me to forgive Boyde and to give him yet another chance. I told Boyde this in very plain language. I claim no credit—I have never felt the smallest credit—for what I did. It was simply that somehow it seemed impossible *not* to forgive him—anything. But the time was near, though the feeling of forgiveness still held true in me, when my forgiveness took another form. Thirty years ago these little incidents occurred. It seems like thirty days.

CHAPTER XIX

IT is a mercy one cannot see the future. In that New York misery, present and to follow, had I known that some fifteen years later I should be my own master, living more or less "like a gentleman," earning my livelihood, though a very bare one, by writing, I could never have faced what I did face. Any value that may have lain in the experiences would certainly have been missed, at any rate. If one knew that the future promised better things, there is no patience in human beings that could hold and wait for it; if, on the other hand, it promised worse, I have met no courage that could bear the present. Those who preach "live in the present only" have common sense on their side.

With the memory of the past, similarly, such folk show wisdom. Reincarnation is an interesting theory to many; yet to recall past lives could have but one effect —to render one ineffective now. To recall the failures of a mere forty years is bad enough; to look back over a hundred lives would be disastrous: one could only sit down and cry.

December had come with its cold and bitter winds, and the doctor, ever faithful, had let me up. I went for my first little walk, leaning on Boyde's arm. Round Grammercy Park we crawled slowly, and that first taste of fresh air, the sound of wind in the leafless trees, a faint hint of the sea that reaches even the city streets, gave me an unforgettable happiness and yearning. The plan to settle in the backwoods again obsessed me. A little later I had almost persuaded the doctor, and Kay in my letters, to take up a claim north of the Muskoka Lakes where we had spent such a happy summer. Boyde was to come too —"as a sort of excitement, I suppose!" was the doctor's bitter comment.

I grew gradually stronger. Reporting was still impossible, but, introduced by Boyde, I earned something by posing in the studios. A "sitting" was three hours. Some artists paid by the hour, but Charles Dana Gibson, then drawing his weekly cartoons in *Life*, always paid for a full sitting, though he might use his model for an hour only. He was a rapid worker, and a good fellow; he never forgot to ask if one was tired of any particular attitude; my first pose to him was for a broken-down actor leaning against a hoarding covered with advertisements, the joke being something about a bill-board and a board-bill. I was thrilled when it appeared in *Life*. There was always a great rush among the models for Gibson's studio. The only other poses I remember are swinging a golf club and sitting for a bishop's arms and hands. I wore big sleeves. These, however, were not in Gibson's studio.

My memory of this work is dim; it was not unpleasant; only its uncertainty against it, though a good week might bring in as much as fifteen dollars. Smedley, who illustrated for *Harper's Magazine*, was the painter we all disliked most; Cox, son of Bishop Cox, Cleveland Cox being his full name, I think, was a favourite: he was a gentleman. There was Zogbaum too, another illustrator, and there was Lynwood Palmer, the horse-painter, and leading artist on *The Rider and Driver*, a first-class weekly of that day. "Artist Palmer," as the papers called him later, was a character. His kindness to me stands out. He had very great talent—for getting the likeness of a horse. We called him "The Horse." He made a success at his work, painted the "King's Horses and Men" in subsequent years, and settled down eventually—he was an Englishman—I believe, at Heston, Hounslow. His New York studio was in Fifth Avenue. Many a time he gave me food there.

"Artist Palmer" was self-taught. I forget the whole story, but he had known his hard times. Looking at my dirty boots the first time I called, he said: "When I drove a cab here, my boots were better cleaned than any

man's on the rank." I was not partial to Dr. Smiles' "Self Help." A "shine" moreover, cost 5 cents, and 5 cents meant a glass of beer and a meal at a free lunch counter—our invariable lunch at that time.

Artist Palmer knew Boyde as a bad lot, and told me that Boyde was lying about me behind my back everywhere, saying that he was supporting me, paying for my illness, and while borrowing money in my name, explaining that I spent all he gave me in dissipation! His method was to present a forged cheque to some good-natured friend after banking hours, obtain the money, and spend it on himself. A tale of woe, with crocodile tears, saved him from subsequent arrest. No one ever prosecuted him.

All this I kept to myself, though I watched Boyde more and more closely. I knew his studio appointments and made him hand over what he earned. I did also an idiotic thing: I went down and warned the pastor's daughter about him. Palmer's words and my own feeling persuaded me to this fatal action. She was a beautiful girl. I received from her the same kind of treatment that I had shown to the man who first warned me. Boyde, of course, soon knew about it. We had a scene. I saw for the first time anger in his face, black hatred too. He never forgave me my stupid indiscretion. . . . The way he explained my action to the girl herself was characteristic of him, but I only learned later how he managed it. In a voluntary confession he wrote a few weeks afterwards, a confession he judged might convince me he was genuinely repentant, and at the same time save him from a grave impending fate, he described it—honestly: "I told her," he said, "she was to pay no attention to your warnings, because you wanted me to marry one of your sisters."

The way I lost Boyde temporarily comes a little later in his story, but may be told here because it marked the close of a definite little chapter in his career with me.

It was the first week in December. I came home—from the doctor's house—at two in the morning. The gas was burning, but the room was not too well lit by the

single burner. Boyde lay asleep on the floor as usual. I moved softly so as not to wake him. I glanced down. What I saw startled me; more, it gave me a horrid turn. The figure on the mattress was another man. It was not Boyde. Then, as I cautiously looked closer, I discovered my mistake. It *was* Boyde after all, but without his moustache.

I stared for some minutes in amazement, for the face was completely altered. The drooping, rather heavy moustache had always hidden his lips and mouth. I now saw that mouth. And it was a cruel, brutal mouth, hard, sensual, with ugly thickish lips, contradicting the kindly blue eyes completely. A sentence of detective-sergeant Heidelberg, a headquarters man, came back to me, himself a brutal, heartless type, if ever there was one, but with years of criminal experience behind him: "Watch the mouth and hands and feet," he told me once in court. "They can fake the eyes dead easy, but they can't fake the mouth hell give 'em. They forgit their hands and feet. Watch their mouth and hands and feet—the way these fidgit. That give 'em away every time."

Why had Boyde done this thing? He was a handsome man, the light graceful moustache was a distinct asset in his appearance. Why had he shaved suddenly? I stared at the new horrid face for a long time. He lay sleeping like a child.

I turned to examine the room, as changes might be there too. All seemed as usual, I saw no difference anywhere. Then my eyes fell on the cupboard with its half-opened door. Boyde's coat, that was my own coat, the only thick one we had between us, hung down from the hook. And, for the first time, the sight of that coat stirred a dim, painful memory of the place where I had first worn it. Naturally it was old, but it was also English. The house in Kent rose up—the lime trees on the lawn, the tennis courts, my father's study, his face, my mother's face, their voices even, the very smell and atmosphere and feelings of happy days that now seemed for ever lost. The whole machinery of association worked suddenly at

full pressure. It was like a blow. I realized vividly the awful gap between those days and these, between myself as I had been and as I was. A whiff of perfume, a smell, produces this kind of evocation in most cases; with me, just then, it was my old English coat.

I remember the strong emotion in me, and that, while still held and gripped by it, my eye caught sight of an envelope sticking out of the inside breast pocket. The coat hung by chance in a way that made it visible. It might easily fall out altogether. I moved over and stretched out a hand to put it safely back and then saw that the writing on the envelope was my own. It was a letter. I took it out. The address was the house in Kent, whose atmosphere still hung about my thoughts. The name was my mother's name. There were other letters, all my own; one to my father; two to my brother, the one being in the world I really loved, the only one of the family to whom I had given vague hints of the real state of affairs.

Some of the letters were two weeks, three weeks old. In each case the five-cent stamp had been torn off. Five cents meant a glass of lager and a meal at a free lunch counter.

There was no reflection. Holding the letters in my hand, I moved across to the mattress. There was an anger in me that made me afraid, afraid of myself. I wanted to kill, I thought I was going to kill, I understood easily how a man *can* kill. In my mind was a vivid picture of my brother's face—it was he, not my parents, who moved with me. But I was not excited; ice was in me, not fire. Something else, too, at that moment was in my veins, a drug . . . a strong dose, too! Five minutes before my entire being had been in a state of utter bliss, of radiant kindness, of tolerance, of charity to everybody in the world. I would have given away my last cent, I would have forgiven anybody anything. All this was swept away in an instant. I felt a cold, white anger that wanted to kill.

Boyde had not heard my footstep; he lay sound asleep. I tore the blanket off. He lay half naked before

me, sleek, well-nourished, over-fed, loathsome, horrible beyond anything I had known. He turned with a jump and sat up. I held the letters against his face, but he was still dazed with sleep and only stared stupidly, first at the letters, then into my face.

I kicked him; I had my boots on.

"Get up!" I said. And, as he got up, rather heavily, trying to protect himself, I kicked him again and again, till at last he stood upright, but at some distance from me, over towards the window. He understood by this time; he saw the letters in my hand. The terror in his face sickened me even in my anger. I saw the evil almost visibly leap out. The unfamiliarity, now that the moustache was gone, the cruelty of the naked lips and mouth, the shrinking of the coward in him, these made an unforgettable picture. He did not utter a syllable.

My own utterance, what words I used, I cannot remember. I did not remember them even ten minutes afterwards, certainly not the next day, when I told the doctor what had happened. Two sentences only remain accurate: "Come close to me. I'm going to kill you," and the other: "Get ready! I'm going to beat you like an animal!"

He stood before me, wearing his short day-shirt without a collar, his hair untidy, his face white, his half-naked body shaking. He dropped to his knees, he got up again and tried to hide, he cringed and whined like a terrified dog, his blue eyes were ghastly. In myself were feelings I had never dreamed I possessed, but whose evidence Boyde must, plainly, have read in my expression. What he could not read, nor ever knew of course, was the fight, the fight of terror, I was having with myself. I felt that once I touched him I should not stop till I had gone too far.

I did not touch him once. Instead, I told him to put on his clothes, his own clothes, and go. He had no clothes of his own. He did not go. . . . I eventually let him wait till morning, when he could find enough rags of sorts to wear in the street. . . . He explained that he had

shaved his moustache because the Rockaway Hunt demanded it.

He had said hardly a word during the entire scene. Half an hour after it was over he was sleeping soundly again. I, too, thanks to the drug, slept deeply. I woke in the morning to find the mattress on the floor unoccupied. Boyde had gone. With him had gone, too, my one thick suit and, in addition, every possible article of pawnable or other value that had been in the room or in the packing-case downstairs. Only the razor and the confession had he left behind because they were beneath my pillow.

The next time we met was in even more painful and dramatic circumstances. I decided it was time to act.

I went down that same morning to police headquarters in Mulberry Street, and swore out a warrant for his arrest on two charges; forgery and petit larceny. A theft of more than $25 was grand larceny, a conviction, of course, carrying heavier punishment. I reduced his theft of my $32, therefore, by seven dollars, so that, if caught and convicted, his sentence might be as short as possible.

But for the fact that I was a reporter on a Tammany newspaper, nothing would have happened. As it was, no bribe being available, the police refused to take any steps in the matter. The confession, they knew, was worthless; it was a small case; no praise in the press, no advertisement, lay in it. "Find out where he is," Detective Lawler said, "and let us know. Just telephone and I'll come up and take him. But *you* do the huntin'. See? *I* don't."

This was Detective Lawler, who, under another name came into a story years later—"Max Hensig," in "The Listener."

The determination to put Boyde where he could no longer harm himself or others held as firm in me as, formerly, the determination to forgive had held. The hunt, however, comes a little later in the story. There was first the explanation of the doctor's secret. The doctor was my companion in the dreadful hunt.

CHAPTER XX

IT was, perhaps, the undigested horror of those days, as also their unsatisfied yearnings after beauty, that tried to find expression fifteen years later in writing. Once they were over I hid them away, those dreadful weeks, trying to forget them. But nothing is ever forgotten, nor is anything finally suppressed in the sense that it is done with. Expression, sooner or later, in one form or another, inevitably crops up.

"Writing," declared the old doctor, after a talk about De Quincey, "is functional." He had many pet theories or hobbies on which he loved to expatiate. "Writing is as much a function of the system as breathing or excretion. What the body takes in and cannot use, it discards. What the mind takes in and cannot use, it, similarly, excretes. A sensitive, impressionable mind receives an incessant bombardment, often an intense, terrific bombardment of impressions. Two-thirds of such impressions are never digested, much less used. The artist-temperament whose sensitiveness accumulates a vast store, uses them; the real artist, of course, shapes them at the same time. The ordinary man, the *Dutzend Mensch*, made in bundles by the dozen, gets few impressions, and needs, naturally, no outlet . . . Writing is purely functional. . . ." It was one of his numerous pet theories.

I went to his house now every night; he gave me his professional care, he gave me sympathy, he gave me food. Pathetic, wonderful old German! His tenderness was a woman's, his temper a demon's. I felt a giant in him somewhere. At close daily quarters his alternate moods perplexed me utterly. He had an Irish wife, a kind, motherly, but quite uneducated woman of about forty-five, and a little girl of eight or nine, whose white face

looked as old as her mother's, and whose diminutive figure seemed to me unusual somewhere. Was it not stunted? Her intelligence, her odd ways, her brilliant eyes captivated me. She called me "Uncle Diedel." She talked, like her mother, broken German. Supper, an extremely simple meal, but a feast to me, was always in the basement kitchen.

The tiny wooden house, owning something akin to squatter's rights which prevented its demolition, stood in the next block to my own, hemmed in by "brownstone fronts," but with a miniature garden. New York, that burns anthracite coal, has no blacks and smuts; the trees and shrubs were really green; the earth smelt sweet. The little house, standing back from the road, was a paradise to me. Its one ground-floor apartment was divided by folding doors into consulting- and waiting-rooms. But no patients came, or came so rarely that it was an event when the door-bell rang. The doctor had the greatest difficulty in keeping himself and family alive. At supper I used to eat as little as possible. He seemed a competent physician. I wondered greatly. As well as real human kindness, there was courage in that little building; there was also a great tragedy I sensed long before I discovered its solution. The strange innocence and ignorance of my up-bringing still clung to me.

The establishment, the poverty, the alternating moods, as I said, puzzled me; I was aware of a whole life hidden away from my observation. They were so poor that dinner was the meal of a workman, they could not even keep a servant. There were worrying debts as well. Often the doctor was so bearish and irritable that I dared not say a word, his wife got curses and abuse, he would almost kick the child, finding fault with such sneers and rudeness that I vowed to myself I would never eat his food again. Then, after a momentary absence in his workshop upstairs, where he kept a lathe and made beautiful chessmen, he would come slowly stumbling down again, and the door would open to a wholly different being. Bent, as always, but well poised and vigorous, with bright smiling eyes,

benevolent yet rugged face, every gesture full of gentle kindness, he would pat his old wife on the shoulder and take the child upon his knee, and beg me to play the fiddle to him or to draw my chair up for an intimate talk. He would light his great meerschaum pipe and beam upon the world through the blue smoke like some old jolly idol. The change seemed miraculous.

His talk seemed, at the time, wonderful to me. He would discourse on Kant, Novalis, Heine, on music, science, astronomy—"when your troubles seem at their worst," he would say, "look up at the stars for half an hour, *with imagination*, and you'll see your troubles in a new perspective"—on religion, literature and life, on anything and everything, while downstairs his kindly old wife prepared the Frankfurters and sauerkraut and coffee.

Neither mother nor child, I noticed, paid much attention to his attacks. The little girl, who called her father "Otto," sat up with us night after night till two in the morning, and hated going to bed. She listened spellbound to the stream of talk. I still see the dingy, lamp-lit room in the heart of the roaring city, the white-haired old doctor, pipe in mouth, the operating chair in the middle of the floor, the little pale-faced child with her odd expression of maturity as she looked from him to me, then led me by the hand to our late meal in the gloomy basement. I often waited achingly for that meal, having eaten nothing since breakfast. Would he never stop talking . . . ?

We talked of Boyde—his face. The doctor's reading of Boyde's face was that it was a bad, deceitful, clever face, evil, brutal and cruel. I mentioned the man's various acts of kindness. "Bait," he exclaimed, with a scornful snort, "mere bait! He wanted a free lodging. He had plenty of money all along, but the free bed gave him more—to spend on himself while you starved."

He talked on about faces. . . . Handsome ones he either disliked or distrusted, handsome features like Boyde's were too often a cloak that helped to hide and deceive. Behind such faces, as a rule, lay either badness

or vacuity; good looks were the most misleading thing in the world. Expression rarely accompanied good looks, good features. He was off on a pet hobby, he waxed eloquent. Beautiful women—he spoke of good features chiefly—were almost invariably wicked, or else empty. Of "Society Beauties" he was particularly contemptuous. "Regular features, fine eyes, perfect skin, but no expression—no soul within. The deer-like eyes, the calm, proud loveliness people rave about is mere vacancy. Pfui!"

His habit of staring into the mirror came back to me, and I ventured a question. He hesitated a moment, then got up and led me to the glass, where, without a word, he began to gaze at his own reflection, making the familiar grimaces, smiling, screwing up his eyes, stretching his lips, raising his eyebrows, pulling his moustache about until, at last, I burst into laughter I could control no longer.

He turned in astonishment. He examined my own face closely for some time. "You are too young still," he said. "You have no lines. In my face, you see, lies all my past, layer below layer, skin behind skin, my face of middle age, of early manhood, of youth, of childhood. It carries me right back."

He began showing me again, pointing to his reflection as he did so. "That's middle age . . . that's youth . . . Ach! and there's the boy's face, look!"

I did not dare to look, for explosions of laughter were in my throat, and I should have hurt his feelings dreadfully. I understood what he meant, however.

"With the face of each period," he explained, "rise the memories, feelings and emotions of that particular period, its point of view, its fears, ambitions—*hopes*. I live again momentarily in it. I am a young man again, a boy, a child. I am, at any rate, no longer myself—*as I now am*." The way he spoke these four words was very grave and sad. "Now," he went on with a sigh, "you understand the charm of the mirror. It means escape from self. This is the ultimate teaching of all religion—

to escape from Self." He chuckled. "The mirror is my Religion."

During this odd little scene I felt closer to his secret than ever before. There was something fine and lovely in him, something big, but it lay in ruins. Had my attitude been a little different, had I not laughed for instance, I think he would have taken me into his confidence there and then. But the opportunity was lost this time. He asked, instead, for music, old, simple German songs being what he liked most. He would lean back in his big chair, puff his great pipe, close his eyes, and hum the melodies softly to himself while I played. It was easy to vamp a sort of accompaniment with double stopping. He dreamed of old days, I suppose; it was a variant of the mirror game. Tschaikowsky, Meyer-Helmund, Massenet he also liked, but it was Schubert, Schumann, even Mendelssohn he always hummed to. Of "*Ich grolle-nicht, auch wenn das Herz mir bricht*," he never tired. The little child would dart up from the basement at the first sound of the fiddle, show her old, white face at the door, then creep in, sit in a corner, and never take her eyes from "the orchestra." When it stopped playing, she was off again in a second.

One item, while speaking of the music, stands out—chanting to the fiddle a certain passage from De Quincey. The "Confessions" fascinated him; the description of the privations in London, the scenes with Anne when she first brought him out of her scanty money the reviving glass of port, her abrupt disappearance finally and his pathetic faithful search, the lonely hours in the empty house in Greek Street, but particularly his prolonged fight against the drug. It was the Invocation to Opium, a passage of haunting beauty, however, he loved so much that he chanted it over and over to himself. The first time he did this I invented a soft running accompaniment on the lower strings, using double stopping. The mute was on. My voice added the bass. It was a curious composition of which he never tired; it moved him very deeply; I have even seen tears trickling down his cheeks

when it was over. He always left his chair for this performance, walking slowly to and fro while he chanted the rhythmical, sonorous sentences:

"O just, subtle and mighty opium! that, to the hearts of rich and poor alike, for the wounds that will never heal, and for the pangs of grief that tempt the spirit to rebel, bringest an assuaging balm;—eloquent opium! that with thy potent rhetoric stealest away the purposes of wrath. . . . Thou buildest upon the bosom of darkness, out of the fantastic imagery of the brain, cities and temples, beyond the art of Phidias and Praxiteles, beyond the splendours of Babylon and Hekatompylos; . . . and hast the keys of Paradise, O just, subtle and mighty opium. . . .!"

"*Ach! wie prachtvoll!*" he would cry a moment later, "*wie wunderschoen!*" and then would recite a translation he had made into his own tongue, and a very fine one too. Quite delighted, he would repeat the passage over and over again, pausing to compare the two versions, fixing me with his big eyes in order to increase his own pleasure in the music by witnessing the evidence of my own.

Truly he was a Jekyll and Hyde.

It was only during the Jekyll mood this kind of scene took place; in the Jekyll happy humour, too, that I had told him about my strange up-bringing. "Now I understand better," he said, "why you are still so young and know so little of life, and why you are so foolishly good to Boyde"—which annoyed me, because I considered myself now quite old and a thorough man of the world as well.

It was in this mood, too, that we discussed my own theories and beliefs . . . a life in the woods as well. Kay, himself and his family, Boyde and I were to settle in the backwoods . . . perhaps I was as eloquent as I was earnest; he listened attentively; sometimes he seemed almost ready to consent; he understood, at any rate, the deep spell that Nature had for me. But he only smiled when I said I was a failure and an outcast. My life had hardly begun yet! No man was a failure who

had an object and worked for it, even though he never got within miles of accomplishment. "A life for a man is a life *among* men," he would say with emphasis. "The woods are all right as an interlude, but not as a career." He was very sympathetic, but he shook his head violently. "In action lies a man's safety in life," he growled at me. "The world needs men of action, not dreamers," he repeated and repeated, "and Buddhism has never yet produced a man of action. *Do something*, even if it prove the wrong thing. Dreaming, without action, is the quickest way of self-corruption I know." And he would then urge me again to become a doctor, after which he would proceed to dream himself for an hour or two . . . showing that all his life he had been far more of a dreamer than a man of action. . . .

It was chance that suddenly led me into the doctor's secret. He became for me, from that moment, the most pathetic and tragic of human beings. My own troubles seemed insignificant.

One afternoon early in December, gloomy, very cold, a studio appointment failed, and I decided to go to the wooden house. It was that or the public library, but I wanted a talk, I wanted also to get really warm. I had no overcoat; the doctor's room was always like an oven. The vermin I had grown accustomed to and hardly noticed them. An idea of food, too, was in my mind, for the free lunch glass of beer and salt chip-potatoes was all I had eaten since breakfast. Seven o'clock, however, was my usual hour of visit, I had never been in the afternoon before. A memorable visit; we were alone; he told me his secret very quietly.

I found him in his most awful mood, rude, his nerves unbearably on edge. He said he had not expected me, but when I tried to go, he became angry and begged me to stay, saying that I helped him more than I could ever know. Had I brought the fiddle? I said I would run up the street and get it. "No," he implored, "don't go now. You can go later—before supper. *Please* do not leave me—*please!*" He then said he would tell me

something no one else knew, no one except his wife. I wondered what was coming, and felt strangely touched and moved at his treating me with such confidence. His manner was so pathetic, and he seemed suddenly to have become weak and helpless, and somehow or other it was in my power to do him a service. I was thrilled and full of expectation.

But, before he began to tell me, he went up to a little cabinet with a glass door and took out a small bottle full of a white powder, bearing the word, the magical word "Majendie"—a word I can never forget as long as I live—and took some of the powder and made a solution and then sucked some of it up with a needle and turned to me. His face was swollen and looked terrible, for the eyes glowed so hotly, and the skin was so red and white in patches. Then he began to open his waistcoat and shirt till his chest was bare. "Look," he said, for I half moved aside, and when I looked I saw he was covered with hundreds of small red sores.

Evidently my face betrayed shrinking and horror, for the old man laughed and said "Oh, I'm not a leper. They're only blisters," and then finding a little clear space on his skin, put the needle of his syringe through the flesh and injected the fluid into his body. He next quickly put his finger over the spot and rubbed to and fro for about a minute, staring steadily at me while he did so.

"That's morphine," he said in a dead voice, "and the rubbing is necessary to prevent a blister forming."

I knew nothing about morphine except the name, and I was disappointed rather than thrilled, but the next minute he gave me all the thrill I wanted, and more besides:

"I've been fighting it for two years," he said quietly in German, still rubbing the spot and staring hard at me, "and I am slowly getting the better of it. If I don't succeed, it means I die." A cold grim smile that made me shudder stole over his swollen face. "*Death*," he added.

I felt his despair, the despair of doubt, as he said this, and in his eyes blazed suddenly all the suppressed depths of suffering and emotion that he usually kept hidden. Such a flood of sympathy for the old man rose in me that I did not know what to say. Of drugs and their power I knew nothing. I stood and stared in silence, but his voice and manner made me realize one thing: that here was an awful battle, a struggle between human courage, will and endurance, on the one hand, and some tremendous power on the other—a struggle to the death. The word "morphine" seemed to me some sort of demon.

He sat down in his armchair, lit his pipe, pulled up the operating chair for me to lie on beside him, and then told me very quietly why he took it. Already his face looked different, as the morphine circulated through the blood, and he smiled and wore a genial happy air of benevolence that made him at once a different man.

"I shall have peace now for several hours," he said, "but I don't take morphine for pleasure. I take it because it is the only way to keep myself alive and to keep my wife and child from starving. If I can gradually wean myself from it I shall live for years. If not, and I cannot make the dose less and less, it will kill me very soon. I am old, you see."

He told me very simply, but very graphically, speaking in German as he loved to do, that three years ago he had enjoyed a good and lucrative practice. But he had embarked upon some experiments in his leg—I never understood exactly what and did not dare to ask—and to observe these properly he was obliged to use the knife without taking any anæsthetic. His wife stood beside him and staunched the blood, but the pain and shock proved more than he was equal to, being an old man, and a collapse followed. All his patients left him, for he could not attend to them, and in order to be in a fit condition to see even chance callers he had to inject morphine. Thus the habit began, and before he knew where he was the thing had him by the throat. He was a man of great natural strength of will and he began to stop it, but the

fight was far harder than he had imagined, and his nerves seemed to have gone to pieces. Unless he had the support of a dose, he was so brutal, irritable and rude that no one could stay in his presence, and no patient would come near him. He never got his practice back again, and whenever a stray patient called now he had to take an injection, or he would be sure to behave in such a way that the man or woman would never return. He used atropine to mix with his morphine, and thus tried gradually to cure himself, and lately had succeeded in reducing the quantity very considerably, but it was an awful fight, and he admitted the end was uncertain. He said I helped him to bear the strain. My presence, he said, the music too, gave him some sort of comfort and strength, and he was always glad to see me. When I was there he could hold out longer than when he was alone, and one reason he was telling me all this intimate history—telling it to a comparative stranger—was because he wished me to try and help him more.

I stammered some words in broken German about being eager and willing to help, and he smiled and said he thanked me and "we would make the fight together."

"The charm is very powerful," he went on, "especially to a nature like mine, for when I take this stuff the world becomes full of wonder and mystery again, just as it was for me sixty years ago when I was a boy with burning hopes and high dreams. But far more than that, I *believe in people* again. That makes more difference in your life than anything else, for to lose faith in men makes life unbearable. Bitter experiences have shaken my trust and belief in my fellow creatures. But with this stuff in me I find it again and feel at peace with the world."

"That is why you sometimes approve and at other times disapprove of my attitude towards Boyde?"

"Yes," he said, with a most benign and delightful expression in his eyes. "Give him every chance. There's lots of good in him. He feels, no doubt, that everyone who knows about him distrusts him. Weak men will

always try more or less to live up to what is expected of them, for they are easily hypnotised. If they feel every one expects only evil from them their chief incentive is lost."

"Then I ought never to let him think I've lost belief in him?"

"Never. Frighten him, kick him, urge him along with violence, anything to make him move of himself towards being decent; but never suggest he *cannot* be, and *is not*, decent and straight."

How we talked that night—and how I suffered from hunger, for when morphine was in him the old doctor ate little, and this time he was full of ideas and ideals, and had so sympathetic a listener, that he forgot I might want food, and it was not till after one in the morning that he began to flag and thought of coffee. We went down into the kitchen, and there we found the patient wife dozing on the wooden chair, and the child reading a book—"Undine"—on the deal table, with her eyes so bright I thought they were going to shoot out flame. She looked up and stared at us for a long time before she got herself back from that enchanted region of woods and pools and moonlight. . . . Strange supper parties they were, in that quiet, basement-kitchen between one and two of the winter mornings of December, 1892. . . .

Otto Huebner, having broken the ice, told me much of his own life then. Owing to family disputes he left the manufacturing town in Northern Germany where he was born and brought up, and came to New York as a young man. He never saw his parents again, and took out naturalization papers at once. For years he was employed by Steinway's piano factory, as a common workman at first, then as a skilled man. He was unmarried, he saved money, he began to study at night; the passion for medicine was so strong in him that he made up his mind to become a doctor. He attended lectures when he could. It was a life of slavery, of incessant toil both day and night. He was over forty when he began studying for the examinations, and it took him seven years to attain

his end. His health had suffered during this strenuous time. He had married well after fifty. . . .

Dear, lovable, much-to-be-pitied old man, my heart went out to him ; I was determined to do everything I could to help. I owed him much for counsel, sympathy and kindness, to say nothing of medical attendance and food besides, at a time, too, when I believed myself a complete failure and thought my life was ruined. England, my family, all that I had been accustomed to seemed utterly remote ; I had cut myself off ; I had tumbled into quite another world, and the only friend I had, the only being I trusted, even loved as well, was the old German morphine victim.

Meanwhile, it had been very wonderful to me to see an irritable, savage old man change in a few minutes into a kindly, genial, tender-hearted being, and I began to feel an absorbing curiosity about this fine white powder labelled "Majendie." I invariably now rubbed in the dose, finding with increasing difficulty a clear space of skin in the poor worn old body. I watched the change steal over him. It seemed to me pure magic. It began more and more to fascinate me.

CHAPTER XXI

A FEW days after the doctor's secret had been laid bare I received a brief, curt letter from McCloy to say he could not keep my place open for ever; how soon was I coming back? Six weeks had passed already. The doctor convinced me I was not yet in a condition to face ten hours' hard reporting a day. I answered McCloy as best I could, thanking him, and telling the facts. Dr. Huebner also wrote him a line.

I was distressed and anxious, none the less, and that evening I was certainly not at my best. I gave the old man but little help. His method of using me was simple: if I could manage to interest him, by talk, by music, by books, by anything at all, it enabled him to postpone the hour of injection. Each time we tried to make this interval longer; each time, he told me, he took a smaller quantity.

On this particular evening, hungry and depressed as I was, I failed to be "interesting," and no forced attempt could make me so. My own condition, in any case, was pretty low; my friend's dejection and excessive irritability proved the last straw. We disagreed, we hurt each other's feelings a little, I relapsed into silence finally, the gloom was dreadful. My own troubles just then were uppermost in my mind. If I lost my job, I kept thinking, what on earth would happen to me? . . .

The old man presently, and long before his time, got up in silence and went to the glass cabinet where now the Majendie bottle stood. He no longer kept it in his workshop out of sight. His face was black as thunder. Conscience pricked me; I roused myself, saying something by way of trying to prevent, whereupon he turned and said savagely: "Do you want to see me die? Or lose my reason?"

As already mentioned, I was totally ignorant of drugs and their effect. His words, which I took literally, frightened me. I watched him mix the solution, fill his syringe slowly with shaking hands, then unfasten his clothes. I found the place and rubbed the skin as usual, while he sat back in his big chair, in sullen silence. He drew the needle out; his face was awful; he sighed and groaned; I really thought he was going to collapse before my eyes, perhaps to die. I rubbed and rubbed . . . while the magical change stole slowly over him. His face cleared, his smile came back, he looked younger, his very voice became mellow instead of harsh and rough, his eyes lit up with happiness.

The contrast was astonishing, the effect so rapid. And, for the first time, a longing rose in me: if only *I* could have some of this bewitching panacea! My troubles would all melt away. I should feel happy. Hunger also would disappear. Was it so terrible and dangerous after all?

The thought went through me like a burning flame.

It was a thought, merely. I had no intention of asking, not even of suggesting, such a thing. I would not have dared to; the old man, I knew, besides, would never, never consent; his obstinacy was beyond any power of mine to modify. None the less, the thought and desire were distinctly in me at that moment. It even crossed my mind that he was selfish, inconsiderate, unkind, not to realize that a little, oh, just a tiny dose, would help me and make me happy too.

The change in him was now complete, he settled back in his deep chair. I heard him asking for the fiddle. I remember the effort it cost me to say something about being ready to try, and how I concealed my sulky face as I crossed the room to open my case. I felt disappointed, rather sore, a trifle angry too; he could so easily open the gates of heaven for me. I fumbled with the case, delaying on purpose, for no music lay in me, and I did not want to play, I felt miserable all over. My back was turned to him. And then I heard my name softly spoken close behind me.

I turned with a start, it was the doctor's voice, its peculiar softness struck me. He was coming slowly across the room, a curious smile on his face, peering at me over the top of his spectacles, the shoulders bent forward a little, his gait slouching, his slippers dragging along the carpet, his white hair tumbling about his forehead, moving slowly at me—and in his raised right hand was a needle poised to strike.

I knew what it meant: he was going to give me morphia without even being asked. A queer revulsion of feeling came over me. He was saying something, but I did not hear the words properly, nor understand them, at any rate; his voice, too, was so low and soft. My brain was in a whirl. Something in the old man's appearance frightened me. The idea of the drug now also frightened me. Then, suddenly, a complete recklessness rushed over me.

"Take off your coat," I heard him say. "And now roll your sleeve up. *So! Nun, jetzt*"—he gazed hard into my eyes—"*aber—nur—ausnahmsweise!*" With slow earnest emphasis he repeated the words: "As an exception—only!"

I watched him choose the place on my arm, I watched the needle go in with its little prick, I watched him slowly press the small piston that injected the poison into my blood. He, for his part, never once moved his eyes from mine till the operation was ended, and my coat was on again. He wore that curious smile the whole time. "You needed it to-night," he said, "just a little, a very weak dose—*aber—nur—ausnahmsweise!*" He walked over and put the little Majendie phial back upon the shelf. Then he filled his pipe and drew up the operating chair for me to lie on. His eye was constantly on me. The music was forgotten. He wanted to talk.

Whether he had done this thing really to give me a little happiness, or whether his idea was to make me "interesting" for his own sake, I do not know. The fact is that within three minutes of the needle's prick I was in a state of absolute bliss.

A little warm sensation, accompanied by the faintest possible suggestion of nausea which was probably my own imagination, passed up the spine into the head. Something cleared in my brain, then burst. A sense of thawing followed, the melting away of all the things that had been making me unhappy. I began to glow all over. Hope, happiness and a gorgeous confidence flowed in; benevolence, enthusiasm, charity flooded me to the brim. I wanted to forgive Boyde *everything* to the end of time, sacrifice my entire life to cure my old German friend; everything base, unworthy, sordid in me, it seemed, had dropped away. . . .

The experience is too well-known to bear another description; it varies, of course, with individuals; varies, too, according to the state of health or sickness, according to whether it is needed or not really needed; and while some feel what I felt, others merely sleep, or, on the contrary, cannot sleep at all. The strength of the dose, naturally, is also an important item. Individual reactions, anyhow, are very different, and with Kay, to whom later the doctor gave it too, three doses produced no effect whatever, while the fourth brought on the cumulative result of all four at once, so that we had to walk him up and down, pouring strong black coffee down his unwilling throat, urging him violently not to sleep—the only thing he wanted to do—or he would, old Huebner assured him—never wake again. . . . In my case, at any rate, wasted physically as I was, empty of food, under-nourished for many weeks, below par being a mild description of my body, the result seemed a radiance that touched ecstasy. It was, of course, an intensification of consciousness.

Such intensification, I well knew, could be produced by better if more difficult ways, ways that caused no reaction, ways that constructed instead of destroyed . . . and the first pleasure I derived from my experience, the interest that first stirred flashingly and at once through my cleared mind, was the absolute conviction that the teaching and theories in my books were true. . . .

The doctor sat, smiling at me from his chair.

"I would not do this for many," he said in German, "but for you it has no danger. *You* could stop anything. You have real will." After a pause he added: "Now we are happy; we are both happy. Let us dream without thinking. Let us *realize* our happiness! . . ."

The hours passed while we talked, and my hunger was forgotten. I only wanted one thing to complete my happiness—I wanted Kay, I wanted Boyde, and I wanted one figure from across the sea, my brother. Had these three come to join the circle in that dingy consulting-room, my heaven, it seemed to me, would have been made perfect. . . .

The passing of time was not marked. I played the fiddle, and we chanted the old man's favourite passage: "O just, subtle and mighty opium!" . . . its full meaning, with the appeal it held, now all explained to me at last. As I laid the instrument down, I saw the white face of the little girl just inside the half-opened door. She caught my eye, ran up to me, and climbed upon my knee.

"Oh, Uncle Diedel," she cried, "how big your eyes are! I do believe Otto has given you some of his Majendie medicine. Are you going to die, too, unless you have it?"

Nothing, it seemed, was hidden from the clear vision that lay in me then; the appalling truth flashed into me on the instant. The little, stunted figure, the old expression in the pallid child-face, the whiteness of the skin, the brilliant eyes, all were due to the same one thing. Did the doctor, her own father, give *her* the needle too?

It was on this occasion, this night of my first experience with morphine, that I found my letters with the stamps torn off. I reached home, as described, about two in the morning, still in a state of bliss, although the effect of the drug was waning a little then. But there was happiness, affection, forgiveness and charity in my heart, I thought. This describes my feelings of the moment certainly. How they were swept away has been already told. So much for the pseudo-exaltation of the drug! And, while on this subject, the part played by the drug in this par-

ticular little scrap of history may as well be told briefly at once and done with.

The suggestion that I could "stop anything," combined with my own desire, was potent. There was another way in which the insidious poisoning also worked: I became so "interesting," and entertained the old doctor so successfully, that he found himself able to do without his own dose. The stern injunction "*nur ausnahmsweise*" was forgotten. Without the stuff in my blood I was gloomy, stupid, dull; with it, I became alive and helped him. But the headache and depression, the nausea, the black ultimate dejection of the "day after" could be removed by one thing only. Nothing else had the slightest effect, and only another dose could banish these after-effects—a stronger dose. While the old man was soon able to reduce not only the quantity he took, but the number of injections as well, my own dose, to produce the desired effect, had to be doubled.

Every night for four weeks that needle pricked me. In my next incarnation—if it takes place—I shall still see the German doctor slouching across the room at me with the loaded syringe in his poised hand, and the strange look in his eyes. It seems an ineradicable memory. . . . By the end of the four weeks, I was working again on the newspaper; my visits to the wooden house I cut down to two a week, then one a week. It was a poignant business. He needed me. Desire for the "balm that assuaged," desire to help the friend who was slowly dying, desire to save myself from obvious destruction, these tugged and tore me different ways. For the full story I should have to write another book. . . . Three things saved me, I think—in the order of their value: my books and beliefs; Nature—my Sundays in Bronx Park or the woods of the Palisades in New Jersey; and, lastly, the power of the doctor's own suggestion, "*you* could stop anything!" . . .

When May came, with her wonder and her magic, I was free again, so free that I could play the fiddle and talk to the old man by the hour, and feel even no desire for the drug. Nor has the desire ever returned to me from

that day to this. An experiment with haschisch, a good deal later, an account of which I wrote for my paper at the time, had no "desire" in it. Foolish and dangerous though the experiment was, of course, the *cannabis indica* was not taken for indulgence, nor to bring a false temporary happiness into a life I loathed. I did it to earn a little extra money; Kay did it with me; three times in all we took it. Some of the effects I tried to describe years later in the first story of a book, "John Silence."

My decision, with the steps I had taken, to arrest Boyde, I told to the doctor on the afternoon following the discovery of his treachery with my letters. He approved. This time even his Jekyll personality approved.

"You'll never catch him though," he growled. "He's too clever for you. He'll hear about the warrant and be out of the State in a day, if not out of the country. In Canada they can't touch him. Besides, the police won't stir a finger. Oh, you'll never catch him."

I felt otherwise, however, I meant to catch him, while at the same time I did not want to. The horrible man-hunt began that very night.

CHAPTER XXII

THE search for Boyde was a prolonged nightmare: used several times already, this phrase alone describes it. It lasted over a fortnight. Every night, from nine o'clock till two, or even later in the morning, it continued. The old doctor almost invariably came with me. It was mid-winter and bitter cold, I still had no overcoat, a thin summer vest being my only underwear. The disreputable haunts we searched were heated to at least 70° F., whereas the street air was commonly not far from zero, with biting winds or icy moisture that cut like a knife. It must have been the drug that saved me from pneumonia, for I was in and out of a dozen haunts each night. . . . I was a prey to contrary and alternating emotions—the desire to let the fellow go free, the conviction that it was my duty to save him from himself, to save others from him as well. The distress, unhappiness and doubt I experienced made that prolonged man-hunt indeed a nightmare.

Plans were laid with care and knowledge. Boyde, we argued, had money, or he would have returned to East 19th Street. Had he enough to bribe the police, or to go to Canada? We decided that his contempt for me would outweigh any fear he felt that I might take action. The "Night Owls" were now away on tour; he would hardly go after Pauline M——. We concluded he was "doing the town," as it was called, and was not very far from East 19th Street. With his outstanding figure and appearance, it ought not to be difficult to find some trace of him in the disreputable places. The "Tenderloin"—a region about Broadway and 30th Street, so packed with illegal "joints" that their tribute to the police was the richest and juiciest of the whole city—was sure to be his hunting

ground. To the Tenderloin haunts, accordingly, we went that first night of the chase.

As a reporter I knew the various places well already, and felt quite equal to making my search alone, but the doctor, though in no condition to traipse about the icy street after dark, insisted on accompanying me. Nothing I said could prevent him coming. Truth to tell, I was not sorry to have him with me—in some of the saloons; besides which I had no money, and something—lager beer cost only five cents a glass—had to be ordered in each place. We hurried from one saloon to another, looking in at various gambling hells, opium joints, dancing places and music-halls of the poorer kind where men and women met on easy terms, and we stayed at each one just long enough to make inquiries, and to benefit by the warmth and comfort, without being pestered by the habitual frequenters.

I had in my possession a small photograph of Boyde; it was on tin, showing the head and shoulders; it had been taken one day earlier in our acquaintance when we went together to a Dime Museum in 14th Street, It now proved very useful. It showed his full face, big eyes, drooping moustaches and eyeglass. The absence of the moustache altered him a great deal, but the eyeglass and the six feet two inches in height counterbalanced this.

At every "joint" I produced this photograph, asking the attendants, bar-tenders, and any women I judged to be frequenters of the place, whether they had seen the original recently, or anyone like him. Some laughed and said they had, others said the opposite, but the majority refused to say anything, showed insolently their suspicion of me and my purpose, and, more than once, made it advisable for us to get out before we were put out. At such places customers are chary about information of each other. Among the women, however, were some who knew clearly who it was we "wanted," though saying nothing useful, and soon the doctor decided it was a mistake to show the photograph too much, for Boyde would be warned by these women, while many, fearful that they

themselves were "wanted," would merely lie in self protection, and set us upon false trails. Any woman who had not paid her weekly blackmail money to the ward man was in danger, and few, to judge by their appearance, were not involved in robbery, knock-out drops, or the ubiquitous "badger-game." Yet these, I knew, were the places Boyde would feel at home in. My being a newspaper man proved of value to us more than once, at any rate. My thoughts, as we sat in a curtained corner of some "hell," whose overheated atmosphere of smoke, scent, alcohol and dope was thick enough to cut with a knife, watching, waiting, listening, must be imagined. I watched every arrival. The tension on nerves already overstrained was almost unbearable. A habit of the doctor's intensified this strain. He did not, I think, remember Boyde very well, and was constantly imagining that he saw him. The street door would open; he would nudge me and whisper "*Sehen Sie, da kommt der Kerl nun endlich. . . .!*" He pointed, my heart leapt into my mouth; nothing could induce me to arrest him, it seemed, and my relief on seeing it was a stranger was always genuine—at the moment.

One night—or early morning, rather—the doctor, who had been silent for a long time, turned to me with a grey, exhausted face. The morphine was beginning to fail him, and he must inject another dose. This happened several times. . . . Behind a curtain, or in a place aside where we were not even alone, he opened his clothes, found a clear space of skin, and applied the needle, while I rubbed the spot with my finger for about a minute to prevent a blister forming. No one, except perhaps a very drunken man or woman occasionally, paid the smallest attention to the operation; to them it was evidently a familiar and commonplace occurrence. . . . "You must not stay up any longer," he would say another time, after a sudden examination of my face. "You look dreadful. Come, we will go home."

I was only too glad to be marched off. We paced the

icy streets arm in arm, numerous people still about on various errands, tramcars and elevated trains still roaring, saloons and joints blazing with light, wide open till dawn, while the old man, rejuvenated and stimulated by the drug, discoursed eloquently the whole way, I dragging by his side, silent, depressed, weary with pains that seemed more poignant then than hunger or mere physical fatigue.

The next night it would be the same, and the one after that, and the next one after that too—the search continued. It wore me down. I saw the eyeglass staring furtively at me from behind every corner, even in the daytime. His footstep sounded behind me often. At night I locked my door, for fear he might steal back into the room. . . . Once or twice I reported to headquarters that I was on the trail, but the detective had lost interest in the case; a conviction was doubtful, anyhow; he was not "going to sit around catching flies"; only the fact that I was a reporter on the *Sun* made him pause. "Telephone when you get him," he said, "and I'll come up and do the rest." Much fresh information about Boyde had also come my way; he had even stolen the vases from a Church communion table—though he denied this in his confession later—and pawned them. In every direction, and this he did not deny, he had borrowed money in my name, giving me the worst possible character while doing so. Probably indeed, I never lived down *all* he said about me. . . .

It was a bitter, and apparently, an endless search. From the West Side joints, we visited the East Side haunts of vice and dissipation. I now knew Boyde too well to think he would "fly high"; his tastes were of the lowest. The ache it all gave me I can never describe. . . .

We went from place to place as hour after hour passed. We found his trail, and each time we found it my heart failed me. A woman, gorgeously painted, showing her silk stockings above the knee, her atmosphere reeking of bad scent and drink, came sidling up, murmuring this and that. . . . The Doctor's eye was on me, though he said

no word, made no single gesture. . . . The tin-type photograph was produced. . . . "Yep, I seen dat fellar," grinned the woman in her "tough" bowery talk they all affected in the Tenderloin. "A high flier . . . raining in London, too"—a gibe at the "English" habit of turning up one's trousers—with a stream of local slang, oaths, filthy hints and repeated demands to "put 'em up," meaning drinks. Then a whispered growl from the old German "*Nichts! . . . sie luegt . . . los mit ihr!*" A further stream of lurid insults. . . and she was gone, while another sidled up a little later. They all knew German, these women. Was not New York the third biggest German city, qua population, in the Empire? Few, as a matter of fact, were American. Barring the mulattos and quadroon girls, to say nothing of the negresses, the majority were French, Hungarian, Spanish, Italian, Dutch or some polyglot mixture not even the British Museum could define. . . .

Never did the old German's kindness prove itself as in these hideous night-watches. Apart from all questions of trouble and expense, he was obliged to take extra doses of morphine to meet the charge upon his system, at a time, too, when he was struggling to reduce the quantity. Compared to what he did, even the fact that he gave the poison to others, possibly to his own child among them, seemed negligible. Not only did he accompany me during the chase, spending hours in low, suffocating dens of beastliness, walking the wind-swept streets in mid-winter, suffering insults and acute discomfort, but also he bestowed practical care and kindness on me during the day, providing me with food (I was in no state even to pose in the studios at the time), and even suggesting that I should fit up a bed in his workshop where he kept the lathe and made the chessmen. All this, too, from an old man, himself in deep misery, and on the losing side of a fight far more terrible than I ever knew or imagined, a fight, *he* then realized already, was to end before very long in failure, which meant death. The strange, broken old being, twisted and distorted though his nervous system was by

a drug, showed—to me, at any rate—that rare thing which experience of life proves greater than intellect, than success, than power, or brilliance may achieve—a heart. If reincarnation, with its karmic law, be true, either he owed me a heavy debt from some forgotten past, or I owe to him a debt some future life will enable, and enforce me, to repay.

It was at the end of the first ten days that, quite by chance, we stumbled upon the trail of Boyde. He had been seen in a "swell dive" on the West Side—with a woman. He was spending money like water. How had he come by it? Whom had he swindled now? We were in the East Side, following a false clue, when this information was given to us—under conditions impossible to describe—and we hurried across to the neighbourhood indicated. An hour later we were only a short thirty minutes behind his glittering path. He was visiting expensive joints. Champagne flowed. The woman wore furs. He wore a light coloured box-cloth overcoat. Both were "high fliers." And he was drinking hard.

The information, I confess, had the effect of stiffening me. It was impossible not to wonder, as we sat in the cross-town tram of East 23rd Street, whether in his gay career he gave a single thought to the room in East 19th Street, where he shared my bed, wore my suit, ate my food, such as it was, and where he had left me ill, alone and starving. The old doctor was grim and silent, but a repressed fury, I could see, bit into him. Was there, perhaps, vengeance, in the old, crumpled man? "No weakness, remember," he growled from time to time. "I hold him, while you telephone to Mulberry Street. *Pflicht, pflicht!* It is your duty to—to everybody . . .!"

The trail led us to Mouquin's, where he had undoubtedly been shortly before, then on to a place in 34th Street . . . and there we lost it hopelessly. It was not a false alarm, but the trail ran up a tree and vanished. He had gone home with the woman, but who she was or where she lived, not even the ward man—whom I knew by chance, and, equally by chance, met at the door—could tell us. I

telephoned to headquarters to warn Detective Lawler to be in readiness. Lawler was out on a "big story" elsewhere, but another man would come up with the warrant the moment I sent word. I had, however, no occasion to telephone again that night, nor even the next night, though we must evidently have been within an ace of catching him. It was like searching for a needle in a haystack, or for a rabbit in a warren. The neighbourhood, this joint in particular, was alive with similar characters; all the women wore furs; all the men were tall, many of them had "glass-eyes," the majority seemed English with "their trousers turned up." We sat for hours in one den after another, but we caught no further indication of the trail. It had vanished into thin air. And after these two exciting and exhausting nights, the old doctor collapsed; he could do no more; he told me he felt unequal to the strain and could not accompany me even one more time. The old man was done.

The day after the search stopped temporarily, Kay arrived in the city, to my great delight. It was a keen relief to have him back. The tour had been a failure, and the company had become stranded in Port Hope, Ontario. Salaries were never paid; he had received hotel board, railway ticket, laundry, but rarely any cash. What luggage he possessed was in the Port Hope hotel, held in lieu of payment. It remained there.

We talked things over, and the news about Boyde, heard now for the first time in detail, shocked him. There was no doubt or hesitation in Kay's mind. "Of course you must arrest him; we'll go out to-night and look." We did so, but with no result. Kay had the remains of a borrowed $10, we dined at Krisch's; he had cigarettes, too. . . . We passed a happy evening, coming home early from the chase. Like myself, he had no overcoat, but the money did not reach to getting it from Ikey where Boyde had pawned it. We sat indoors, and talked. . . . Only a short three months before we had sat talking round a camp-fire on our island. It seemed incredible. We discussed my plan for settling in the woods, to which he

was very favourably inclined. Meanwhile, he explained, his Company was preparing another tour with better plays and better cast. They hoped to start out after Christmas, now only a week away. The word "Christmas" made us laugh. I still had the Christmas menu of our Hub dinner, and we pinned it upon the wall. It might suggest something to the long-suffering Mrs. Bernstein, Kay thought.

But instead we ate our oatmeal and dried apples. . . .

CHAPTER XXIII

IT was on the Tuesday before Christmas that I caught Boyde; the day also before the White Star steamers sailed. The cold was Arctic, a biting east wind swept the streets. There was no sun. If ever there was a Black Tuesday for me it was that 18th of December, 1892.

Towards evening, the doctor, I knew, would expect me as usual; there was nothing to prevent my going; and yet each time the thought cropped up automatically in my mind I was aware of a vague, indeterminate feeling that somehow or other I should not go. This dim feeling also was automatic. There was nothing I knew of to induce, much less to support it. I did not mention it to Kay. I could not understand whence it came nor what caused it, but it did not leave me, it kept tugging at my nerves. "You're not going to the doctor's to-night," it said, "you're going elsewhere."

After dark this odd feeling became more and more insistent, and then all at once it connected itself with Boyde. Quite suddenly this happened. I had not been thinking of Boyde at the moment; now, abruptly, up cropped his name and personality. I was to go out and catch him.

My mind resisted this idea. Several things, besides, were against it. In the first place, we had voluntarily given up the hunt and I was resigned to his escape; secondly and thirdly, I dreaded being out in the bitter cold, and I badly needed the "assuaging balm" of old Huebner's needle. If the first two were negative inhibitions, the third was decidedly positive. All three had to be conquered if I was to obey the strange prompting which whispered, and kept on whispering: "Go out and look. You'll find him."

There was, in addition, the usual minor conflict to which I had grown quite accustomed, the conflict between my desire to be relieved of an unpleasant "duty," yet the conviction that it was a duty I had no right to shirk. In spite of my resistance, at any rate, the prompting strengthened; as night fell I grew more and more restless and uneasy; until at last the touch of inevitability that lay behind it all declared itself and the breaking point was reached.

I could resist no longer: it was impossible to contain myself. I sprang out of my chair and told Kay I was going out to catch Boyde.

"Don't go," he said. "Waste of time. He's skipped long ago—been warned." He muttered something more about the intense cold. "You'll kill yourself."

But the impulsion I felt was irresistible. It was as though some inner power drove and guided me. As a matter of fact, I went straight to the exact spot where, among the teeming millions of the great city, Boyde was. Fifteen minutes earlier or later, I should have missed him. Also, but for a chance hesitation later—lasting sixty seconds at most—he would have seen me and escaped. The calculation, whether due to intelligence or to coincidence, was amazingly precise. I left our room at nine o'clock; at a quarter to ten I stood face to face with Boyde.

The wind was driving a fine dry dust of snow before it, and all who could remained indoors. The streets were deserted; despite the nearness of Christmas, signs of bustle and the usual holiday crowd were absent. I walked very quickly to keep warm, an odd subconscious excitement in me. I seemed to know exactly where I was going, though, had anybody asked me, I could not have told them. Up 4th Avenue to 23rd Street, then west across Broadway, I passed 6th and 7th Avenues, with only one pause of a moment. At the corner of 7th Avenue I hesitated, uncertain whether to turn north, or to continue west towards 8th Avenue. A policeman was standing outside a saloon side-door, a man I had known in the Tombs police court; an Irishman, of course. I recognized him,

He was friendly to me because I had used his name in a story; he remembered me now. I produced the tin-type photograph. He inspected it under the nearest electric light.

"Yep," he said, "I seen that feller only a few minutes back—half an hour maybe—only he's lifted his mustache."

"Shaved his moustache—yes?"

"That's what I said," as he handed back the tin-type. "Got a story?" he inquired the same instant. "Anything big doing?"

"Which way did he go?"

"Up-town," said the policeman, jerking his thumb in the direction north. "Up 8th Avenoo. And he was travellin' with a partner, a big feller, same size as yerself, I guess." He moved off to show he had no more to say. Any story that might result would be out of his beat. There was nothing in it for him. His interest vanished. I hurried on to the corner of 8th Avenue, the edge of a bad neighbourhood leading down through the negro quarter towards the haunts of the river-front, and there I paused again for a second or two.

I was still in 23rd Street, but I now turned up the Avenue. It was practically deserted, the street cars empty, few people on the pavements. The side-streets crossed it at right angles, poorly lit, running right and left into a world of shadows, but at almost every corner stood a brilliant saloon whose windows and glass doors poured out great shafts of light. Sometimes there were four saloons, one at each corner, and the blaze was dazzling. I passed 24th, 25th, 26th and 27th streets. There were little flurries of dry snow; I saw no one, nothing but empty silent sidewalks swept by the icy wind.

At 28th Street there were four saloons, one at each corner, and the blaze of light had a warm, enticing look. Through the blurred windows of the one nearest to me, the heads of the packed crowd inside as they lined up to the bar were just visible, and while I stood a moment, shivering in the icy wind, the comforting idea of a hot whisky came to me. For the wind cut like glass and neither

my excitement nor the exercise had warmed me. I hesitated, standing against a huge electric light pole, in whose black shadow I was quite invisible. A hot whisky, I reflected, in this neighbourhood would cost 20 or 25 cents; I had 30 cents in my pocket; I needed the stimulant; I was very weak; I felt cold to the bone. But 25 cents was a lot of money. I might want a car-fare home besides . . . and I was still hesitating when two tall figures emerged suddenly out of the dark side-street into the flood of light, swung sharp round the corner, and passed through the glass doors into the saloon. The figures were two men, and the first of them was Boyde.

For a second my heart seemed to stop, then began immediately racing and beating violently. In that brilliant light I saw every detail sharply, Boyde and his companion, both mercilessly visible. The man I wanted wore a big horsy overcoat of light-coloured box-cloth with large white buttons, the velvet collar turned up about his ears. The other man I did not know; he was taller than Boyde and wore no overcoat: he was the "partner travellin' with him" mentioned by the policeman. His gait was unsteady, he reeled a little.

The clamour of noisy voices blared out a moment into the street before the doors swung to again, and I stood quite still for an appreciable time, blotted out of sight in my black shadow. Had I not hesitated a moment to reflect about that hot whisky I should have passed, my figure full in the blaze, just in front of the two men, who would have waited in the dark side-street till I was safely out of sight.

The state of my nerves, I suppose, was pretty bad, and the lack of my customary evening dose accentuated it. I know, anyhow, that at first I realized one thing only—that I could never have the heart to arrest the fellow. This quickly passed, however; the racing of my blood passed too; determination grew fixed: I decided to act at once. But should I go in, or should I wait till they came out again? If I went in there would probably be a fight; Boyde's hulking companion would certainly take his side;

the lightest blow in my weak state and I should be down and out. On the other hand, there was a side door, there were several side doors, and the couple might easily slip out, for I could not watch all the doors at once.

I decided to go in. And the moment the decision was taken, complete calmness came over me, so that I felt myself merely an instrument of fate. It was horrible, but it had to be. Boyde was to get the punishment he deserved. I could not fail.

The way the little scene was stage-managed seemed curious to me when it was all over, for as I moved out into the light, a couple of policemen came across the broad avenue behind and looked inquisitively at what must have seemed my queer behaviour. I immediately crossed to meet them, while never taking my eye off the swing-doors. A man who had just gone into that saloon, I told them, was to be arrested.

"That so?" they asked with a grin, thinking me drunk, of course. "And what's he done to get all that?"

I told them I was a reporter on the *Sun*, that I was the complainant in the case, and that Detective Lawler of the 9th District had the warrant at headquarters. They could telephone to him if they liked. They listened, but they would not do anything. *I* could telephone to Lawler myself; *they* weren't going to act without a warrant. They finally agreed to wait outside and "see fair play," if I would go in and fetch "the guy" out into the street. "We'll stop any trouble," they said, "and take him to the station if *you* make a complaint." I agreed to this and walked in through the swing-doors.

The saloon was crowded, the heat wonderful, the bars thronged with men in all stages of intoxication; bartenders in white jackets flew to and fro; business was booming, and at the least sign of a row, everybody, more or less, would have joined in. This general impression, however, was only in the background of my mind. What filled it was the fact that Boyde was looking at me, staring straight into my eyes, but in the mirror. The instant the

doors swung to I had caught his reflection in the long glass behind the bar. Across this bar, a little space on either side of him, he was leaning on both elbows, his face resting in one hand. The eye-glass—it was asking for trouble to wear it in such a place—had been discarded. He was alone. His back, of course, was towards me.

For a few seconds we stared at one another in this way, and then, as I walked down the long room, pushing between the noisy crowd, he slowly turned. I reached him. A faint smile appeared on his face. He evidently did not know quite what to do, but a hand began to move towards me. He thought, it seemed, I was going to shake hands, whereas I thought he was probably going to hit me. Instead my hand went to his shoulder.

"Boyde," I said, keeping my voice low, "I want you. You're going to be—arrested."

The smile died out, and an awful looked rushed into his eyes. His face turned the colour of chalk. At first I felt sure he was going to land me a blow in the face, but the abrupt movement of his body was merely that he tried to steady himself against the bar, for I saw his hand grip the rail and cling to it. The same second his features began to work.

"I've got to arrest you," I repeated. "It's Karma. You had better come quietly."

"Karma——" he repeated in a dazed way and stared. He was bewildered, incredulous still.

The same second, however, he grasped that it was serious, my face and voice and manner doubtless warned him. This, at last, was real; he suddenly knew it. The expression of appeal poured up instantly into his eyes, those big, innocent, blue eyes where I had so often seen it before. Only now there was no moustache, and the brutal cunning mouth was bare. He began to speak at once, keeping his voice low, for several people were already interested in us. He used his softest and most pleading tone. With that, too, I was thoroughly familiar.

"Blackwood—for God's sake let me go. I'm off to England to-morrow on a White Star boat. I'm working

my passage over. For the love of God—for my mother's sake——!"

I cut him short. The falseness, the cowardice, the treachery all working in his face at once, sickened me. At the same time an aching pity rose. I felt miserable.

"You must come out with me. At once."

He turned quickly and looked about him, his eyes taking in everything. Some men beside us had heard our talk and were ready to interfere. "What's your trouble?" one of them asked thickly. I realized we must get away at once, out into the street, though the scene had barely lasted two minutes yet.

"There's a policeman waiting outside," I went on. "You'd better come quietly. A row won't help you." But I said it louder than I thought, for several heads turned towards the swing-doors. The effect on Boyde, however, was hardly what I expected, and seemed strange. He wilted suddenly. I believe all thought of resistance or escape went out of him when he heard the word "police." His jaw dropped, there was suddenly no expression in his eyes at all. A complete blankness came into his features. It was horrible. He's got no soul, I thought. He merely stared at me.

"Whose is that overcoat?" I asked, feeling sure it was not his own. I already had him by the arm.

"Roper's," he said quietly, his voice gone quite dead. "Here he is." His face was still like a ghost's. It was blank as stone.

I had quite forgotten the companion, but at that same moment I saw Roper hovering up beside me. His attitude was threatening, he was three-parts drunk; a glance showed me he was an Englishman, and obviously, by birth, a gentleman.

"Roper, if you want your coat, you'd better take it. Boyde is under arrest."

"Arrest be damned!" Roper cried in a loud voice that everybody heard. There was already a crowd about us, but this increased it. Roper was looking me over. He glared with anger. "You're that cad Blackwood, I

suppose, are you? I've heard about you. I know your whole damned rotten story and the way you've treated Boyde. But Boyde's a friend of mine. No one can do anything to him while *I'm* here . . . !"

He roared and shouted in that crowded bar-room, while the whole place looked on and listened, ready to interfere at the first sign of "a fuss." A blow, a little push even, would have laid me out, and in the general scuffle or free fight that was bound to follow, Boyde could have got clear away—but neither he nor Roper thought of this apparently. Roper went on pouring out his drunken abuse, lurching forward but never actually touching me, while Boyde stood perfectly still and listened in silence. He made no attempt to shake off my hand even. I suddenly then leaned over and spoke into his ear:

"If you come quietly at once it's only petit larceny—stealing the money. Otherwise it's forgery."

It acted like magic. An expression darted back into his face. He turned, told Roper to shut up, said something to the crowd about its being only a little misunderstanding, and walked without another word towards the doors. I walked beside him, the men made a way; a few seconds later we were in the street. Roper, who had waited to finish his drink, and was puzzled besides by the quick manœuvre, lurched at some distance after us. The two policemen, who had watched the scene through the windows, stood waiting. Boyde swayed against me when he saw them. I marched him up to the nearest one. "I make a charge of larceny against this man, and the warrant is at Mulberry Street with Detective Lawler. I am the complainant." They told him he was under arrest, and we began our horrible little procession to the station in West 21st Street.

Boyde was between the two policemen, I was next to the outside one, on the kerb, Roper came reeling in the rear, shouting abuse and threats into my face. The next time I saw Roper was in the court of General Sessions, weeks later, when Boyde was brought up for trial. By that time he had learned the truth; he came up and

apologized. Boyde, he told me, had swindled him even more completely than he had swindled me.

The search in the station made me sick at heart; every pocket was turned out; there was 80 dollars in cash; the sergeant used filthy language. Boyde was taken down to a cell, and I, as a newspaper reporter, was allowed to go down with him. I stayed for two hours, talking through the bars.

It was two in the morning when the sergeant turned me out after a dreadful conversation, and when I reached home, to find Kay sitting up anxiously still, I was too exhausted, from cold, excitement and hunger, to tell him more than a bare outline of it all. I had to appear at eight o'clock next morning and make my formal charge against Boyde, in the Tombs Police Court—the Tombs, of all places!—and with that thought in my mind I fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXIV

BOYDE came up with the first batch of prisoners. The portentous shadow of the Tombs prison, with its forbidding architecture, hung over the whole scene.

My first sight of him was sitting among the rows of prisoners, waiting to be called. He looked ill and broken, he made a pleading sign to me. As a reporter I had the right to interview anybody and everybody, and I made my way along the serried wooden benches. Lawler sat next him, looking very pleased to have secured his prisoner, and a good story into the bargain, without any trouble to himself; but when I tried to shake hands with Boyde, I found to my horror that he was handcuffed.

"Say, boss, be sure and git me name spelled right, and tell the reporters that *I* effected the arrest," was the first thing that Lawler said, using the phrase the detectives always used.

By promising the man all he wanted and more besides, I managed to get us all three into a corner where we could talk without everybody else hearing; also I got the handcuffs taken off, for they were quite unnecessary inside the building. The first thing Boyde said was to beg for a drink; he had taken a lot the night before, his throat was parched, his nerves were bad. At the moment this was quite impossible, but I got one for him in the reporters' room after his case had been called. The second thing he said was to beg me to "keep it out of the papers," though this, of course, lay quite beyond my powers. Apart from this he said very little except to repeat and repeat that he was repentant, and to beg me to withdraw the charge, though this was now impossible, the matter being out of my hands. Also, he wondered what the sentence would be—he meant to plead guilty—and implored me to leave out the forgery. He was very badly frightened.

That early morning hour in the stinking atmosphere of the over-heated police court was too ghastly ever to be forgotten, but there were particular moments when pain and pity, to say nothing of other strangely mixed emotions, stabbed me with peculiar ferocity. When the reporters flocked round him like vultures after prey was one of these; another was when Boyde stood in front of the Tammany magistrate, Ryan by name, and pleaded guilty. A mistake, though not actually wrong, had crept into the charge sheet. In my excitement of the night before the amount stolen had been entered as $32, and though this was the truth, I had meant to make it only $25. I was unintentionally to blame for this—it was now Grand Larceny instead of Petit Larceny. A magistrate could only deal with the lesser offence, and Boyde therefore was held for trial in General Sessions, instead of being sentenced then and there. The look he gave me as Ryan spoke the words was like a knife. He believed I had done this purposely. A third unforgettable moment was when he was being roughly pushed downstairs on his way to a cell in the Tombs: he looked back forlornly over his shoulder at me.

In the reporters' room it was decided to print the "Boyde story." I knew all the men; Acton Davies was there for the *Evening Sun*, specially sent down by McCloy. The reporters dragged and tore at me. I realized what "interviewed" victims felt when they wished to hide everything away inside themselves. Yet the facts had to be told; it was best I should give them accurately, if as briefly, as leniently, as possible. The sight of all those vultures (of whom, incidentally, I was one) scribbling down busily the details of my intimate life with Boyde, to be hawked later in the streets as news, was likewise a picture not easily forgotten.

Before the ordeal was over, Lawler returned from the cell. He insisted, with a wink at me, that he had made the arrest; the credit of the chase he also claimed; he had, too, additional facts about Boyde's past criminal career of which I was quite ignorant, supplied by records at headquarters. Lawler intended to get all the advertise-

ment for himself he could. I let his lying pass. On the whole it seemed best to let him be responsible for the arrest; it made the story more commonplace, and, luckily, so far, I had not described this scene.

An hour later I was talking with Boyde between the bars of his cell in the Tombs prison, while, two hours later, every evening paper in New York had a column or a column and a half about us printed on its front page. There were scare headlines of atrocious sort. There were posters, too, showing our names in big letters. News that day happened to be scarce, and the Boyde story was "good stuff" apparently. The talk with him in the cell was one of many: he was there six weeks before the trial came on.

The papers finished him; the case was too notorious for him ever to swindle again unless he changed his name. They scarified him, they left out no detail, they hunted up a thousand new ones, he had "cut a wide swath" (*sic*) all over New York State, as one of them printed. I had not mentioned Pauline M—— or the pastor's daughter, yet both were included. To see my own name in print for the first time, the names of my parents, and of half the peerage as well, was bad enough; to find myself classed with bad company generally, with crooks and rogues, with shady actresses, with criminals, was decidedly unpleasant. Paragraphs my brother wrote to me appeared in London papers too. Copies of the New York ones were sent to my father. "Too foxy for Algernon" was a headline he read out to my brother in his library. Boyde had even written to him, signing himself "your cousin," to ask for money for "your poor son," but had received no reply. There is no need now to mention names, but any distinguished connexion either of us possessed appeared in the headlines or the article itself. "Nephew of an earl held in $1,000 bail," "Cousin of Lord X," "Scion of British Aristocracy a Sneak-thief," were some of the descriptions. "Son of a duchess in the Soup," was another. The *Staatszeitung* had a phrase which threw a momentary light on an aspect of lower life in the city, when Freytag, the German reporter who had taught me

how to write a court story, described me as "Solm einer *sogenannten* Herzogin." He only laughed when I spoke to him about it. "How should *I* know," he said sceptically. . . .

Boyde came up in due course before Recorder Smythe in general sessions, the most severe and most dreaded of all the judges. He still wore my thick suit, he wore also a pair of Harding Davis's boots, and, I believe, something else of Sothern's. His sentence was two years in the Penitentiary on Blackwell Island. A group of other people he had swindled, including "Artist Palmer," were in court; so was an assistant of Ikey's, with *all* our pawned articles. Every single thing, whether stolen goods or not, was returned to me. The doctor and Kay were also there. Some of his letters are a human document:

Tombs,
December, 1892.

Oh, Blackwood, what black treachery I returned you for your many kindnesses, base lying for all your straightforward dealing with me! You freely forgave me what ninety-nine men out of every hundred would, if not imprisoned me for, certainly never have forgiven me. I returned evil for good, and you still bore with me. You said—I shall never forget it, for it was when you found the stamp torn off your letter—and even at that moment I had money in my pocket belonging to you, just as I had when you shared your last 50 cent. piece that night at Krisches, for I *must* say this, though I could tear myself to pieces when I think of it—You said, 'B. how you must *hate* me!'

No, Blackwood, it seems a paradox, but I could not hate you if I tried to. I don't say this because I am in prison, or with any desire to flatter. I am sincere in everything I say and it comes from my heart. You have every reason to think from my former actions that I am not sincere above reward, but I am.

Oh, the old, but nevertheless true remark, TOO LATE! It comes home to me with striking and horrible vividness. Too Late! I have forfeited the respect of every good and honest man, have disgraced my English name and my family. But, let me go. Five years of service will be the best thing for me. I can enlist under another name and may perhaps get a commission in time. Give me the chance of redeeming myself, please. If ever any man was sincerely repentant for the past I am that man. ARTHUR B.

Please excuse mistakes and alterations. I am so fearfully shaky.

The Tombs City Prison,
Centre Street, N.Y.

Please read through before destroying it.

I have begged another sheet of paper and stamp in order to make one final appeal.

Will you not come down again on receipt of this? Please do, for God's sake. No visitors are allowed on New Year's Day, or on Sunday. New Year's Day! What a new year's day for me! Let me begin it afresh. I have a favour to ask you which I must ask you verbally; I cannot put it on paper. It is getting dark; so once more I ask you, I implore you, to have mercy on me for my mother's sake. For her sake spare

ARTHUR B.

Visiting hours 10—2. I am speaking the truth and nothing but the truth when I say that I am sincerely sorry for all that I have done and implore your pardon. This is not an insincere expression, but one from my heart. Come down again, please, even to speak to me, for you don't know the mental agony I am suffering.

A. B.

Tombs City Prison,
New Year's Day.

It was more than kind of you to come all the way down here and then after all not be able to see me; not much loss to you, it is true, but a bitter disappointment to me. Palmer came down and talked *very* kindly to me and instilled a little hope in me. But this is a wretched New Year's Day.

I was talking to an old convict this morning, a man who in his life has been about sixteen years in jail, and he said that if he had only been let off in the first instance with a few days in here, he would have been a different man to-day, but after serving one term he became reckless and has now become a notorious thief. As I said to you, think of me after 20 years' penal servitude.

Blackwood, won't you and Palmer stay your hands once more? I will leave the country, and if ever I should return you could always have me arrested. I will never trouble you again. Let me make a fresh start once more.

Should you decide not to press the charge you can go to the District Attorney's Office and inform them of the fact.

I once more *implore* you and Palmer to have pity on me, and please come and see me! May I wish you and Palmer a bright and happy New Year, brighter and happier than the past one.

ARTHUR B.

Many thanks for the paper and envelopes. Bless you!

The Tombs.

Very many thanks for your visit yesterday. It is the only pleasure I have. I believe what you say is true—that I am reaping the result of evil done in the past and that only the real way to atone is to meet it squarely and accept my punishment without grumbling. If Karma is true, it is just, and I shall get what I deserve, and not an iota more.

I cannot tell you how grateful I am to you for being so lenient to me and even writing to the District Attorney on my behalf. I am truly grateful, Blackwood. Please do not think I am not sorry for what I have done, or that I am not really penitent, for I am indeed.

It was bitterly cold last night and I was awfully glad to have my overcoat, and blessed you for sending it. I know you got it out of pawn for me, and that is another kindness.

Again, for the last time probably, I thank you for your many acts of kindness. I bitterly regret and earnestly repent for the manner I treated you, returning evil for good, and I shall think much of you when serving my time under a blazing sun or in my cramped and chilly cell. ARTHUR B.

Tombs Prison.

I have just been to the Court House and pleaded guilty. My sentence is remanded till Friday week. If I could only get that lawyer I might get the sentence reduced a little. But Judge Smythe is a very hard man. My small hopes were dashed away on hearing that you had been subpœnaed to go before the Grand Jury this morning.

Now all hope is gone; only blank, blank despair; no hope, all is dark. I wish I could die—much rather that than suffer this awful remorse. Do you know I sometimes think I am going mad? When I come out I shall be too old for the army, and what else can a felon, a criminal, a convict do? Is crime the only refuge? Shall I sink lower and lower? Will what small sense of decency and honour I have left be utterly destroyed and made callous by propinquity with other criminals?

What a frightful nightmare to conjure up! Nightmare? No, it is only too true; it is stern, inexorable reality. Thank you for sending the clothes. I had no change before. Bless you! A. B.

Tombs City Prison.

What follows I wish to write voluntarily. It is a Confession and relieves me—

I certainly wish to convey to you the fact of my sincere and deep sorrow for the shameful manner I treated you and abused your confidence and kindness. I fear that one of my letters

cannot have reached you, as I am sure I wrote at length on this subject. You mistake and misjudge me when you think it is only fear that prompts me to write as I do. My eyes are opened to the enormity of my past crimes, opened by thinking and seeing things in the proper light. I have been alone with my thought for days now, and God knows how many more days will pass over my head before I again face the world. It will relieve me to give you a full confession of my treachery, for I believe there is no real repentance without real confession.

To begin with the editor. I never had a chance of the position at Rockaway, although the editor once said casually that he would try and find me some similar position. I lied to you all through in that, for I wished you to think I had prospects of paying work in view. When you used to come down with me to Franklin Street (Harper's) I waited about upstairs and looked at books, etc., and then came down and concocted some lies about what I had said and done. I once borrowed $15 from him (Richard Harding Davis, Editor "Harper's Weekly") and said they were for you. My dealings with Sothern were that he from time to time lent me money, some $50 in all, and gave me a position at ten dollars a week. I told him when borrowing that the money was for your doctor, and when borrowing more I said you had wasted it in drink. I asked him to cash several of the cheques I forged, but he would never do this. I was paid up in full by the manager and also for the extra performances of the "Disreputable Mr. Reagen." I little thought when I was playing Merivale's part that I should act it true to life. With Mr. Beattie I lied all through. He never had any money of mine or knew my mother or ever heard from her. He never bailed me out, and I never used to see him as I said I did. You and Palmer thought that I spent some time in jail this summer, but I would rather not say anything in writing about that. My dealings with Palmer were that I borrowed money from him and said it was for you. I also went to your banker acquaintance and borrowed twenty-five dollars for a specialist, saying it was at your request. I did pawn the overcoat you gave me to post to Kay, and that time you forgave me for stealing your money I had in my pocket the proceeds of three stories of yours I had given the *Sun*, and they had paid for. But, even in the face of your forgiveness, I wanted this money so much for my indulgences that I could not face the privation of handing it over to you. I lied in the face of your kindness and generosity, and when you even needed food I was going about drinking and womanizing and spending freely. When my funds were exhausted I came back to you, for I knew you would always forgive me. It is awful. No wonder you want to see me go to prison. I am as wicked a man as ever lived, I believe. I wonder what caused me to tell such lies. Am I a natural born liar? It

seems like it. You wrong me in one thing—in thinking my sorrow is sham and prompted by fear and the hope of getting off. I cannot find words to express my contrition. Believe me, I would do anything in my power, and will do, when my term is up, to make reparation. I submit to the inevitable. I can imagine something now of what you must have suffered when I left you alone without food or money those four days and nights. I think, however, the worst thing I did was telling the pastor's daughter that you tried to prevent our meeting because you wished me to marry one of your sisters, though I do not know, of course, whether you have any even. That, and the taking the stamps off your letters so that I could get beer, seem to weigh most heavily with me now in my darkness and loneliness. I do not know what my sentence will be—heavy, I suspect, unless I can get someone to plead for me, and I have not a single solitary friend to do that. I am utterly alone. I have been in this cell now twenty-one days, and have a week more before sentence is given. It seems like six months. No one can realize what prison is like till they have tried it.

Believe me, I am deeply and truly sorry. I speak from my heart. Think of me as kindly as you can when I am in the Penitentiary. I hope I shall see you once more.

ARTHUR B.

I saw Boyde twice in my life afterwards; I heard, indirectly, from him once: the prison chaplain wrote to ask for "his things" which, Boyde told him, I "insisted upon keeping." He never had any "things" at all while I knew him; the letter was indignant and offensive. Boyde had evidently "told a tale" to the chaplain.

The first time I saw him was some eighteen months after he had been sent up, good behaviour evidently having shortened his term. I was walking up Irving Place and saw him suddenly about fifty yards in front of me. It was my own thick suit I recognized first, then its wearer. I instinctively called out his name. He turned, looked at me, hurried on, and went round the corner into 21st Street. Once round the corner, he must have run like a hare, for when I entered the street too, he had disappeared.

The second, and last, time I saw him was in London ten years later—at a bookstall in Charing Cross station. He saw me, however, first, or before I could come close enough to speak, and he melted away into the crowd with

swift and accomplished case. I was near enough, though, to note that he had grown his heavy moustache again, still wore his eyeglass, and was smartly, even prosperously, dressed. He looked very little older. From Lynwood Palmer, whom I met soon afterwards in Piccadilly, I heard that my old employer, the Horse, had seen him at Tattersalls not long before, and that he, Boyde, had come and begged Palmer not to give him away as he was "after some Jews only"! Artist Palmer took no action.

CHAPTER XXV

McCLOY took me back on the *Evening Sun*, according to his promise, about mid-January, and about the same time Mrs. Bernstein sold her house and moved to another lower down the street, almost opposite to the doctor's. There were no insects, all our things were out of pawn, we had overcoats again, but we had to find a new Ikey, for the old Ikey, of course, would have nothing more to do with our trousers, gladstone bag, top hat and tennis cups.

The East 19th Street chapter was closed when Boyde went to Blackwell Island; another in the same street had begun: Mrs. Bernstein begged us to move with her: we owed her big arrears of rent; also, for some odd reason, she really liked us. In her odd way she even tried to mother me, as though her interest, somewhere perhaps her pity too, were touched. "You haf had drouble in England, I subbose?" she hinted sympathetically. She had read the newspapers carefully, and could not understand why I should be exiled in poverty in this way unless I had done something shady at home. It followed that I had been sent out to America for my country's good. She shared, that is, the view most people took of my position in New York.

Only three months had passed since we arrived, but it seemed years. I had never lived anywhere else. The sheltered English life, the Canadian adventures, above all the months upon our happy island, lay far away down the wrong end of a telescope, small, distant patches, brightly coloured, lit by a radiant sun, remote, incredible. It was not myself but another person I watched moving across these miniature maps of memory. Those happy days, states, places, those careless, sanguine moods, those former points of view so bright with hope, seemed gone for ever.

I now lived in a world where I belonged. I should never climb out again.

The intensity of emotion at the time is difficult to realize now, and quite impossible to recapture. I only know that my feelings burned like fire, all the fiercer, of course, for being inarticulate. The exaggeration was natural enough; everything was out of proportion in me: Boyde had destroyed my faith in people. I believed in no one. The doctor had said that to lose belief in others made life insupportable. I found that statement true. There was a deep bitterness in my heart that for a time was more than I could manage, and this distrust and bitterness led me into an act of cruelty that shames me to this day.

Into the roar and thunder of that frenzied newspaper office stole a hesitating figure one afternoon, a shy youth with rosy cheeks and curly hair, dressed in shabby but well-cut clothes, and obviously an Englishman. He wore gloves and carried a "cane"; these marked him as a "Britisher" at once. He was asking for someone; fingers were pointed at me; he was faintly familiar; I had seen the face before—but where? He came over and introduced himself as Calder, son of a Midland coach-builder; we had met at some place or other—outside a studio door, I think—and he knew Kay. I forget what he was doing in New York—idling, I think, or travelling. He had outlived his cash, at any rate. He was in difficulties. I distrusted him instantly. He was, of course, another Boyde. I gave him the curtest possible greeting. He, in turn, found the greatest possible difficulty in telling me his story.

I was sitting at the reporters' table in shirt-sleeves (owing to the suffocating temperature of the over-heated office), scribbling at top speed the details of some lurid "story," while Calder told me his tale. He wanted to whisper, but the noise forced him to shout, and this disconcerted him. No one listened, however; he had merely brought a "story" in. He had—but it was his own story. I have quite forgotten what it was, or what had happened to him; only the main point I remember: he had nowhere

to sleep. Of his story I did not believe a single word, though I did believe that he had no bed. "Can I bunk with you to-night?" he came finally to the point. I told him he most certainly could not. He refused to believe me. I assured him I meant it. I was his last hope, he said, with a nervous grin. I told him to try a doss-house. He grinned and giggled and flushed—then thanked me! It would only be for a night or two, he urged. "You can't possibly let me walk the streets all night!" I replied that one Boyde had been enough for me. I had learnt my lesson, he could walk the streets for the rest of his life for all I cared. He giggled, still refusing to believe I meant it. His father was sending money. He would repay me. He went on pleading. I again repeated that I could not take him in. He left, still thanking me and blushing.

Visions of another Boyde were in my mind. At the time, moreover, our poverty was worse than it ever had been. Boyde, I found, had sold six of my French stories to McCloy at $5 each, and had pocketed the money. My salary was now being docked five dollars each week till this $30 was paid off. We had, therefore, only ten dollars a week between the two of us. Everything was in pawn again, and times were extra hard. To have Calder living on us was out of the question, for once he got in we should never get him out. I was tired of criminal parasites.

It was my head that argued thus; in my heart I knew perfectly well that Calder was guileless, innocent as milk, an honest, feckless, stupid fellow who was in genuine difficulty for the moment, but who would never sponge on us, and certainly do nothing mean. Conscience pricked me—for half an hour perhaps; in the stress and excitement of the day I then forgot him. That evening Acton Davis, the dramatic critic, gave me a theatre seat, on condition that I wrote the notice for him. It was after eleven when I reached home. Curled up in my bed, sound asleep, his clothes neatly folded on the chair, lay Calder.

It was February and freezing cold. Kay was away for

the week, trying a new play at Mount Vernon, where he slept. There was no reason why I should not have let Calder spend at least one warm night in the room. But, apart from the shock of annoyance at finding him asleep in my own bed, and apart from a moment's anger at his cool impudence, the startling parallel with Boyde was vividly unpleasant. It was Boyde No. 2 I saw sleeping in my bed. If I let him stay one night I should never get rid of him at all. $10 a week among three! Calder must take up his bed and walk.

I woke him and told him to dress and leave the room. I watched him dress, heard him plead, heard him describe the freezing weather, describe his walking the streets all night without a cent in his pockets. He blushed and giggled all the time. It was some minutes before he believed I was in earnest, before he crawled out of bed; it was much longer before he was dressed and ready to go. . . . I saw him down the stairs and through the front door and out into the bitter street. I gave him a dollar, which represented two days' meals for me, and would pay a bed in a doss-house for him. When he was gone I spent a wretched night, ashamed of myself through and through. It really was Boyde who turned him out, but the excuse had no comfort in it. The little incident remains unkindly vivid; I still see it; it happens over again; the foolish, good-natured face, the blushes and shyness, the implicit belief in my own kindness, the red cheeks and curly hair—going through the front door into the bitter streets. It all stands out. Shame and remorse go up and down in me while I write it now, a belated confession. . . . I never saw Calder again.

Another thing that still shames me is our treatment of old greasy Mother Bernstein. Though a little thing, this likewise keeps vividly alive. A "little" thing! The big things, invariably with extenuating circumstances that furnish modifying excuses and comforting explanations, are less stinging in the memory. It is the little things that pierce and burn and prick for years to come. In my treatment of Mrs. Bernstein, at any rate, lay an

alleviating touch of comedy. In the end, too, the debt was paid. Twelve months later—it seemed a period of years—Kay got suddenly from a brother £100—an enormous sum; while I had twice received from my brother, God bless him! post-office orders for £10. This was a long time ahead yet, but Mrs. Bernstein eventually received her due with our sincerest thanks. She had moved to another house in Lafayette Place by then. We paid up and left her, Kay going to one boarding-house, I to another.

The payment in full, at any rate, relieved my conscience, for the way we bullied that poor old Jewess was inexcusable. The excuse I found seemed adequate at the time, however—we must frighten her or be turned out. Each time she pressed for payment, out came my heavy artillery; imaginary insects, threats of newspaper articles, bluster, bluff and bullying of every description, often reducing her to tears, and a final indignant volley to the effect that "If you don't trust us, we had better go; in fact, if this occurs again, we *shall* go!" More than once we pretended to pack up; more than once I announced that we had found other rooms; "Next Monday I shall pay you the few dollars we owe, and leave your house, and you will read an account of your conduct in the *Evening Sun*, Mrs. Bernstein." She invariably came to heel. "I ask my hospand" had no sequel. By frightening and bullying her, I stayed on and on and on, owing months' and months' rent and breakfast; our ascendancy over her was complete. It was, none the less, a shameful business, for at the time it seemed doubtful if we should ever be in a position to pay the kind old woman anything at all. . . .

The fifteen months I now spent reporting for the *Evening Sun* at fifteen dollars a week lie in the mind like a smudged blur of dreary wretchedness, a few incidents only standing out. . . . The desire for the drug was conquered, the old doctor was dead, Kay had obtained a position with a firm in Exchange Place, where he made a small, uncertain income in a business that was an absolute mystery to me, the buying and selling of exchange between banks. Louis B—— had meanwhile

arrived, without a cent to his name. It was a long and bitter period, three of us in a small room again, but at least an honest three. Louis's French temperament ran to absinthe—when he could get it. He used the mattress on the floor, while Kay and I shared the bed between us. Our clothes were useless to the short, rotund little Frenchman; as the weeks passed he looked more and more like a pantomime figure in the streets, and when he went to give his rare French and Spanish lessons he never dared to take off his overcoat (which he had managed to keep) even in the hottest room, nor during the most torrid of summer days. Often he dared not unbutton the collar he turned up about his neck, affirming with much affected coughing that he had a "dreadful throat." He was, by nature and habit, an inveterate cigarette smoker; a cigarette, indeed, meant more to him than a meal, and I can still see him crawling about the floor of the room on all fours in the early morning, "hunting snipe," as he called it—in other words, looking for fag-ends. He was either extremely sanguine or extremely depressed; in the former mood he planned the most alluring and marvellous schemes, in the latter he talked of suicide. His wife, whom he dearly loved, had a baby soon after his arrival. He suffered a good deal. . . .

He was a great addition to our party, if at the same time a great drain on our purse. His keen, materialistic French mind was very eager, logical, well-informed, and critical in a destructive sense, an iconoclast if ever there was one. All forms of belief were idols it was his great delight to destroy; faith was superstition; cosmogonies were inventions of men whose natural feebleness forced them to seek something bigger and more wonderful than themselves; creeds, from primitive animism to Buddhism and Christianity, were, similarly, man-made, with a dose of pretentious ethics thrown in; while soul, spirit, survival after death, were creations of human vanity and egoism, and had not a single atom of evidence to support them from the beginning of the world to date. Naturally, he disbelieved everything that I believed, and, naturally,

too, our arguments left us both precisely where we started. But they helped the evenings, often hungry evenings, to pass without monotony; and when, as sometimes though but rarely happened, Louis had come by a drop of absinthe, monotony was entirely forgotten. He would sit crossed-legged on his mattress, his brown eyes sparkling in the round little face, his thick curly black hair looking like stiff wire, his podgy hands gesticulating, his language voluble in French and English mixed, his infectious laughter ringing and bubbling out from time to time—and the evening would pass like magic. He was charged with poetry and music too. On absinthe evenings, indeed, it was difficult to get any sleep at all . . . and the first thing in the morning he would be hunting for "snipe" on all fours, cursing life and fate, in a black depression which made him think of suicide, and looking like a yellow Chinese God of Luck that had come to life.

Hunger was agony to him, but, oddly enough, he never grew less rotund. He particularly enjoyed singing what he called *la messe noire* with astonishing variations in his high falsetto. This "mass" was performed by all three of us to a plaster-cast faun an artist had given me in Toronto. It had come in the packing-case with our other things, this Donatello, and we set it on the mantelpiece, filled a saucer with melted candle stolen from a boarder's room, lit the piece of string which served for wick, and turned the gas out. In the darkened room the faunish face leered and moved, as the flickering light from below set the shadows shifting about its features; the fiddle, Louis's thin falsetto, Kay's bass, badly out of tune, and my own voice thrown in as well, produced a volume of sound the other boarders strongly objected to—at one o'clock in the morning. Yet the only time Mrs. Bernstein came to complain, she got no farther than the door: Louis had a blanket over his head and shoulders, Kay was in his night-shirt, which was a day-shirt really, the old Irving wig lying crooked on his head, and I was but half dressed, fiddling for all I was worth. The darkened room,

the three figures passing to and fro and chanting, the strange weird face of the faun, lit by the flickering flame from below, startled her so that she stood stock-still on the threshold without a word. The next second she was gone. . . . What eventually happened to Louis I never knew. Months later he moved to a room up-town. We lost track of one another, and I have no idea how fate behaved to him in after-life. He was thirty-five when he sang the *messe noire*, hunted snipe, and gave occasional lessons in French and Spanish.

These trivial little memories remain vivid for some reason. To my precious Sundays in Bronx Park, or farther afield when the days grew longer, he came too, and Kay came with him. We shared the teapot and tin mug I still kept hidden behind a boulder, we shared the fire I always made—neither of my companions shared my mood of happiness. . . . I was glad when they both refused to get up and start at eight, preferring to spend the morning in bed. For months and months I never missed a single Sunday, wet or fine, for these outings were life to me, and I made a rough lean-to that kept the rain off in bad weather. . . . The car-fare was only 30 cents, both ways; bread and a lump of cheese provided two meals; there were few Sundays when I did not get at least seven or eight hours of intense happiness among the trees and wild stretches of what was to me a veritable Eden of delight. . . . Nothing experienced in later life, tender or grandiose, neither the splendour of the Alps, the majesty of the Caucasus, the mystery of the desert, the magic of spring in Italy or the grim wonder of the real backwoods which I tasted later too—none of these produced the strange and subtle ecstasy of happiness I found on those Sundays in the wastes of scrubby Bronx Park, a few miles from "Noo York City." . . . It was, of course, but the raw material, so to speak, of beauty, which indeed is true always of "scenery" as a whole, but it was possible to find detail which, grouped together, made unforgettable pictures by the score. Though deprived of technique, I could *see* the pictures I need never think of painting. The selection

of significant detail in scenery is the secret of enjoyment, for such selection can be almost endless. . . .

The hours passed too quickly always, but they provided the energy to face what, to me, was the unadulterated misery of the week to follow. A book was in my pocket and Shelley was in my memory. From the tram to the trees was half a mile, perhaps, but with the first sight of these, with the first scent of leaves and earth, the first touch of the wind of open spaces on my tongue, my joy rose like a great sea-wave, and the city life, with all its hideousness, was utterly forgotten. What occupied my mind during those seven or eight hours it would be tedious to describe. . . . I was, besides, hopelessly inarticulate in those early days; conclusions I arrived at were reached by feeling, not by thinking; one, in particular, about which I felt so positive that I *knew* it was true, I could no more have expressed in words than I could have flown or made a million. This particular conclusion that the Sundays in Bronx Park gave me has, naturally, been expressed by others far better than I could ever express it, but the first time I came across the passage, perhaps a dozen years later in London, my thought instantly flashed back to the teapot, the tin mug, and the boulder in Bronx Park when the same conviction had burned into my own untaught mind:

"One conclusion was forced upon my mind . . . and my impression of its truth has ever since remained unshaken. It is that our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but *one special type* of consciousness, whilst all about us, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there are potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus and at a touch they are there in all their completeness; definite types of mentality which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation. No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded. At any rate, they forbid a premature closing of our accounts with reality. The whole drift of my education goes to persuade me that the world of our present consciousness is *only one* out of many worlds of consciousness that exist, and that these other worlds mus

contain experiences which have a meaning for our life also. . . . [The insight in these other states] has a keynote invariably of reconciliation. It is as if the opposites of the world, whose contradictions and conflict make all our difficulties and troubles, were melting into unity." *

The immortal may mingle with certain moods, perhaps, especially when violent contrast underlies the transition, and when deep yearnings, suppressed equally with violence, find their sudden radiant outlet. Since those Bronx Park days, when Nature caught me with such profound, uplifting magic, yet when thought was dumb and inarticulate, I am for ever coming across neat expressions by better minds than mine of what I then felt, and even believed I *knew*, in some unimagined way. Nature drew me, perhaps, away from life, while at the same time there glowed in my heart strange unrealizable desires to help life, to assist at her Utopian development, to work myself to the bone for the improvement of humanity. The contradiction, silly and high-flown though it now sounds, was then true. Inextinguishable fires to this end blazed in me, both mind and heart were literally on fire. My failure with Boyde, my meanness with Calder, to mention no graver lapses, both bit deep, but the intense longing to lose my Self in some Utopian cause was as strong as the other longing to be lost in the heart of some unstained and splendid wilderness of natural beauty. And the conflict puzzled me. Being inarticulate, I could not even find relief in words, though, as mentioned, I have often since discovered my feelings of those distant days expressed neatly enough by others. Only a few days ago I came across an instance:

"If Nature catches the soul young it is lost to humanity," groans Leroy, in a truly significant book of 1922.†

"No, no," replies the poet. "The earth spirit does not draw us aside from life. How could that which is

* "Varieties of Religious Experience." William James.

† "The Interpreters," by A. E. The characters "interpret" the "relation of the politics of Time to the politics of Eternity."

father and mother of us all lead us to err from the law of our being ?"

And, again, as I sat puzzling about the amazing horror of what was called the Civilization of the New World, and doubtless making the commonplace mistake of thinking that New York City was America :—

"Every great civilization, I think, has a Deity behind it, or a divine shepherd who guided it on some plan in the cosmic imagination. 'Behold,' said an ancient Oracle, 'how the Heavens glitter with intellectual sections.'..These are archetypal images we follow dimly in our evolution."

"How do you conceive of these powers as affecting civilization ?"

"I believe they are incarnate in the race ; more in the group than in the individual ; and they tend to bring about an orchestration of the genius of the race, to make manifest in time their portion of eternal beauty. . . ." *

My conception of the universe, at any rate, in these early days was imaginative entirely ; the critical function, which comes with greater knowledge, with reason, with fuller experience, lay wholly dormant. I communed with both gods and devils. New York stoked the furnace—provided the contrasts. Experience, very slowly, furnished the files and sand-paper which lay bare what may be real beneath by rubbing away the pretty gilt. Certain convictions of those far days, however, stood the test, whatever that test may be worth, and have justified themselves to me with later years as assuredly *not* gilt. That unity of life is true, and that our normal human consciousness is but one type, and a somewhat insignificant type at that, hold unalterably real for me to-day. My other conviction, born in Bronx Park in 1892 by the teapot, tin mug, and familiar boulder which concealed these indispensable utensils during the week, is that the Mystical Experience known to many throughout the ages with invariable similarity is *not* a pathogenic experience, but is due to a desirable, genuine and valuable expansion of consciousness which furnishes knowledge normally ahead

* *Ibid.*

of the race; but, since language can only describe the experience of the race, that it is incommunicable because no words exist, and that only those who have experienced it can comprehend it. The best equipped modern "intellectual" (above all the "intellectual" perhaps), the most advanced scientist, as, on the other hand, the drayman, the coster, the city clerk, must remain not only dumb before its revelation, stupid, hopelessly at sea, angry probably, but contemptuous and certainly mystified: they must also appear, if they be honest, entirely and unalterably *sceptical*. Such scepticism is their penalty; it is, equally, their judge and their confession.

CHAPTER XXVI

AMONG the "incidents" that stand out from the dim, miserable smudge of fifteen months, is one that centres about a strange figure, and a most lovable fellow, named Angus Hamilton. Various odd fish drifted on to the paper as reporters, and drifted off again; they form part of an unimportant kaleidoscope. But Angus Hamilton, with his generosity, his startling habits, his undoubted ability, his sad and sudden end, stands out.

My position had improved since the publication of the Boyde story, chiefly, of course, because of the way the peerage had been dragged into its details and its headlines. I received no advance in salary, but I received an advance in respect. Even McCloy was different: "Why waste your time with us?" he spat at me like a machine-gun with a rapid smile. "Go home. Collect a lot of umbrellas and turned-up trousers and letters of introduction. Then come out to 'visit the States,' marry an heiress, and go home and live in comfort!" He was very lenient to my numerous mistakes. Other papers "got a beat" on me, I "fell down" times without number, I failed to get an interview with all and sundry because I could not find "the nerve" to intrude at certain moments into the lives and griefs of others. But McCloy winked the other eye, even if he never raised my pay. Other men were sacked out of hand. I stayed on. "You've got a pull with Mac!" said "Whitey." New men took the places of the lost. Among these I noticed an Englishman. Cooper noticed him too. "Better share an umbrella and go arm in arm," he said in his good-natured way. "He's a fellow-Britisher."

Why he came to New York I never understood. He

was a stepson of Pinero, the playwright, and he received occasional moneys from Daniel Frohman, by way of allowance, I supposed, though I never knew exactly. Clever though he was, he was a worse reporter than myself because he didn't care two straws whether he got the news or did not get it. He had a "pull" of some sort, with Laffan probably, we thought. He came to our boarding-house in East 19th Street. He had a bad stammer. His methods of reporting were peculiar to himself. Often enough, when sent out on a distasteful assignment, he simply went home. He had literary talent and wrote well when he liked. When Frohman handed out his money, he spent it in giving a big dinner to various friends, though he never included Kay, Louis, or myself among his distinguished guests. We had no dress-suits, for one thing.

Hamilton was perhaps twenty-one at the time, a trifle younger than myself, at any rate. He came downstairs sometimes to spend the evening in our room. In spite of his stammer and a certain shyness, he was always very welcome. He liked, above all, to listen to weird stories I used to tell, strange, wild, improbable tales akin to ghost-stories. When the Black Mass failed to attract, when Louis was uninspired by absinthe, or when no argument was afoot, such as whether poet or scientist were the highest type of human being, I discovered this taste for spinning yarns, usually of a ghostly character, and found, to my surprise, that my listeners were enthralled. At a moment's notice, no theme or idea being in my head, I found that I could invent a tale, with beginning, middle and climax. Something in me, doubtless, sought a natural outlet. The stories, at any rate, poured forth endlessly. "May I write that one?" Hamilton would ask. "It's a corker!" And he would bring his written version to read to us a few evenings later. "It ought to sell," he said, though I never heard that it did sell actually. Certainly, it never occurred to me that I might write and sell it myself. And Angus Hamilton is mentioned here because it was owing to a

chance act of his that I eventually took to writing and so found my liberty.

This happened some twelve years later, when I was living in a room in Halsey Street, Chelsea, sweating my life out in the dried milk business and earning barely enough at the job to make both ends meet. A hansom stopped suddenly near me in Piccadilly Circus, its occupant shouted my name, then sprang out—Angus Hamilton.

He came round to my room for a talk over old days; he had done well for himself as Reuter's correspondent in the Manchurian War, had published a book on Korea, and was just off to China, again as Reuter's agent. He reminded me of the stories I used to tell in the New York boarding-house. I had written some of these, a couple of dozen perhaps, and they lay in a cupboard. Could he see them? Might he take them away and read them?

It had been my habit and delight to spend my evenings composing yarns on my typewriter, finding more pleasure in this than in any dinner engagement, theatre or concert. Why this suddenly began I cannot say, but I guess at a venture that the accumulated horror of the years in New York was seeking expression. Wandering in Richmond Park at night was the only rival entertainment that could tempt me from the joy of typing out some tale or other in solitude. "Jimbo" I had already written twice, several of the "John Silence" tales as well, and numerous other queer ghostly stories of one sort or another. From among these last Hamilton took a dozen or so away with him, but forgot to send them back as he had promised. He had gone to China, I supposed, and the matter had slipped his mind. It didn't matter much—I went on writing others; the stories were no good to anybody, the important thing being the relief and keen pleasure I found in their expression. But some weeks later a letter came from a publisher: "I have read your book . . . My reader tells me . . ." this and that "about your stories . . . I shall be glad to publish them for you . . . ," and then a few words about a title and a request that I would call for an interview.

It was some little time before I realized what the publisher was talking about. Hamilton, without asking permission, had sent my stories to him. Eveleigh Nash was the publisher, and his reader at that time was Maude ffoulkes, who later wrote Lady Cardigan's Memoirs, numerous other biographies, also "My Own Past," and to whom I owe an immense debt for unfailing guidance, help and encouragement from that day to this. I never forget my shrinking fear at the idea of appearing in print, my desire to use another name, my feeling that it was all a mistake somewhere, the idea that I should have a book of my own published being too absurd to accept as true. My relief when, eventually, the papers gave it briefest possible mention, a few words of not unkindly praise or blame, I remember too, and my astonishment, some weeks later, to find a column in the *Spectator*, followed not long afterwards by an interesting article in the Literary Page of the *Morning Post* on the genus "ghost story," based on my book—by Hilaire Belloc, as he told me years later. All of which prompted me to try another book . . . and after the third, "John Silence," had appeared, to renounce a problematical fortune in dried milk, and with typewriter and kit-bag, to take my precious new liberty out to the Jura Mountains where, at frs. 4.50 a day, I lived in reasonable comfort and wrote more books. I was then thirty-six.

Whether I should be grateful to my fellow-reporter on the *Evening Sun* is another matter. Liberty is priced above money, at any rate. I have written some twenty books, but the cash received for these, though it has paid for rent, for food, for clothing, separately, has never been enough to pay for all three together, even on the most modest scale of living, and my returns, both from America and England, remain still microscopic. Angus Hamilton I never saw again. A year or so later, while on a lecture tour in New York, things apparently went wrong with him. Life drove against him in some way. He put a sudden end to himself.

It seems strange to me now that so few incidents,

and those such trivial ones, stand out from the long months of newspaper work in New York. Harrowing and dreadful stories, appalling in their evidence of human degradation, or poignant beyond words in their revelation of misery, temptation, failure, were my daily experience week after week, month after month. I might now have bulky scrap-books packed with thrilling plots of every kind, all taken from life. My affair with Boyde, moreover, had taught me how much of curious psychological interest lay behind the most ordinary arrest for a commonplace crime. Yet, of all these thousands of cases, I remember hardly a single one, while of uninteresting assignments Cooper gave me several still live vividly in my memory. Social reporting, in particular, both amused and distressed me, for which reasons probably it has not faded. Sitting in the lobby at Sherry's or Delmonico's when a ball or society function was in progress and taking the names of the guests as they entered, taking the snubs and rudeness of these gay, careless folk as well, was not calculated to add much to my self-respect. The lavish evidence of money, the excess, often the atrocious taste, even stirred red socialism in me, although this lasted only till I was out in the street again. Various connexions, distant or otherwise, of my family often, too, visited New York, while more than one had married an American girl of prominent name. It was odd to see Lord Ava, Dufferin's eldest son, walk up the steps, and odder still to jot down his name upon the list of "those present." There was an American woman, too, who bore my mother's name. . . . To see any of these people was the last thing on earth I wished, much less to speak to them or be recognized; they were in another world to mine; none the less, I had odd sensations when I saw them. . . . A ball of deaf-mutes, too, remains very clear, only the shuffling sound of boots, and of the big drum whose heavy vibrations through their feet enabled them to keep time, breaking the strange hush of the dancing throng, for ever gesticulating with busy fingers.

A much-coveted annual assignment once came my

way, through the kindness of McCloy, I think—the visit to the winter quarters of Barnum and Bailey's Circus. Every newspaper was invited; the animals were inspected; an article was written; and the circus opened its yearly tour with immense advertisements. In the evening there was a—banquet! I came home in the early hours with my pockets stuffed for Kay and Louis—cigars, fruit, rolls, and all imaginable edibles that might bear the transport. But the occasion is clear for another reason—elephants and rats. The keeper told us that the elephants were terrified of rats because they feared the little beasts would run up their trunks. We doubted his story. He offered to prove it. In the huge barn where some twenty-five monsters stood, chained by the feet against the walls, he emptied a sackful of live rats. The stampede, the trumpeting of those frightened elephants is not easily forgotten. In the centre of the great barn stood masses of hay cut into huge square blocks, and the sight of us climbing for safety to the top of these slippery, precariously balanced piles of hay is not easily forgotten either.

The raid at dawn upon a quasi lunatic asylum, kept by an unqualified man, should have left sharper impressions than is the case, for it was certainly dramatic and sinister enough. Word came to the office that a quack "doctor" was keeping a private Home for Lunatics at Amityville, L.I., and that sane people, whom interested parties wished out of the way, were incarcerated among the inmates. The Health Department were going to raid it at dawn. It was to be a "scoop" for the *Evening Sun*, and the assignment was given to me.

I started while it was still dark, crossing the deserted ferry long before the sun was up, but when I reached the lonely house, surrounded by fields and a few scattered trees, I found that every newspaper in the city was represented. Even the flimsy men were there, all cursing their fate in the chilly air of early morning. No lights showed in the building. The eastern sky began to flush. With the first glimmer of dawn I saw the sheriff's men at their various posts, hiding behind trees and hedges,

some crouching under the garden shrubberies, some concealed even on the veranda of the house. After a long and weary wait, the house began to stir; shutters were taken down; a window, then a door, were thrown open; figures became visible moving inside from room to room; and presently someone came out on to the veranda. He was instantly seized and taken away. After several men and women had been arrested in this way, a general raid of the whole house took place. A dozen of the sheriff's men rushed in. The nurses, male and female, the "doctor"-proprietor, his assistants, and every single inmate, sane or crazy, were all caught and brought out under arrest, before they had tasted breakfast.

It was broad daylight by this time. The whole party, of at least thirty, were assembled in a barn where a magistrate, brought down specially for the purpose, held an impromptu court. If some of the inmates were insane at the time and had been so before incarceration, others certainly had been deliberately made insane by the harsh and cruel treatment to which they had purposely been subjected. There were painful episodes, while the testimony was hurriedly listened to in that improvised court of inquiry. Yet it has all, all vanished from my memory. I forget even what the sequel was, or what sentence the infamous proprietor received later on from a properly-constituted court. Many a sane man or woman had been rendered crazy by the treatment, I remember, and the quack had taken heavy payments from interested relatives for this purpose. But all details have vanished from my mind. What chiefly remains is the wonder of that breaking dawn, the light stealing over the sky, the sweet smell of the country and the tang of the salt sea. These, with the singing of the early birds, and the great yearnings they stirred in me, left deep impressions.

One reason, I am sure, why such painful and dramatic incidents have left so little trace, is that I had a way of shielding myself from the unpleasantness of them, so that their horror or nastiness, as the case might be, never really got into me deeply. By a method of "detachment,"

as mentioned earlier, I protected my sensitive inner self from being too much wounded. I would depute just sufficient intelligence and observation to attend to the immediate work in hand, while the rest of me, the major portion, lay inactive, uninvolved, certainly inoperative. Painful and vivid impressions were, none the less, received, of course, only I refused to admit or recognize them. They emerged, years later, in stories perhaps, these suppressed hieroglyphics, but at the actual time I could so protect myself that I did not consciously record them. And hence, I think, my faint recollection now of a thousand horrible experiences during these New York reporting days.

This "detachment," in the ignorant way I used it, was, perhaps, nothing less than shirking of the unpleasant. At twenty-three I had not yet discovered that better method which consists in facing the unpleasant without reservation or evasion, while raising the energy thus released into a higher channel, "transmuting" it, as the jargon of 1922 describes it. "Detachment," however, even in its earliest stages, and provided it does not remain merely where it starts, is an acquisition not without value; it can lead, at any rate, to interesting and curious experiments. It deputes the surface-consciousness, or sufficient of it, to deal with some disagreeable little matter in hand, while the subconscious or major portion of the self—for those who are aware of possessing it—may travel and go free. It is, I think, Bligh Bond, in his "Gate of Remembrance," who mentions that the automatic writer whose revelations are there given, read a book aloud while his hand with the pencil wrote. Many a literary man, whose inspiration depends upon the stirrings of this mysterious subconscious region, knows that to read a dull book, or talk to a dull person, engages just enough of his surface consciousness to set the other portion free. Reading verse—though not poetry, of course—has this effect; for some, a cinema performance, with the soothing dimness, the music, the ever-shifting yet not too arresting pictures, works the magic; for others, light music; for

others, again, looking out of a train window. There are as many ways as individuals. To listen to Mrs. de Montmorency Smith telling her tedious dream, while you hear just enough to comment intelligently upon her endless details, even using some of these details to feed your own more valuable dream, is an admirable method—I am told; and my own childish habit of squeezing "through the crack between yesterday and to-morrow" in that horrible bed of East 19th Street, merely happened to be my own little personal adaptation of the principle. . . .

Incidents that had held a touch of comedy remain more clearly in the memory than those that held ugliness and horror only. A member of the Reichstag Central Party, for instance, Rector Ahlwardt by name, came out to conduct a campaign against the Jews. He was violently anti-semitic. I was sent to meet his steamer at Quarantine because I could speak German, and my instructions were to warn him that America was a free country, that the Jews were honourable and respected citizens, and that abuse would not be tolerated for a moment. These instructions I carried out, while we drank white wine in the steamer's smoking-room. Freytag, I noticed with amusement, himself a Jew, was there for the *Staatszeitung*.

Ahlwardt, however, was impervious to advice or warnings. At his first big meeting in the Cooper Union Hall, arriving late, I noticed at once two things: the seats were packed with Jews, while almost as many policemen stood about waiting; and the reporters' tables underneath the platform showed several open umbrellas. Both, I knew, were ominous signs. Ahlwardt himself, fat, beaming, in full evening dress, was already haranguing the huge audience. At first he was suave and gentle, even mealy-mouthed, but before long his prejudices mastered him and his language changed. Up rose a member of the audience and advised him angrily to go back to Germany. The police ejected the interrupter. Others took his place. Then suddenly the fusillade began—and up went the reporters' umbrellas! A flying egg caught the speaker

full on his white shirt-front, another yellowed his dazzling white waistcoat, a third smashed over his fat face. Pandemonium reigned, during which the German melted out of the landscape and disappeared from his first and last anti-semite meeting in Noo York City. He attempted a little propaganda from the safe distance of Hoboken, N.J., but the Press campaign against him was so violent and covered him with such ridicule, that he very soon took steamer back to his Berlin. Every little detail of this incident, were it worth the telling, I could give accurately. There was no reason to be "detached," unless the protection of the *World* man's umbrella comes under that description.

It was somewhere about this time, too, that another trivial incident occurred, refusing to be forgotten. It, again, increased the respect shown to me by the staff of the paper—Americans being truly democratic!—though it did not increase my salary. A belted earl left his card on me. Coming in breathless from some assignment, I saw McCloy staring at me. "Is this for *you?*" he asked sarcastically, handing me a visiting-card. A brother-in-law, "His Excellency" into the bargain, "Governor of an Australian Province" to which he was then on his way, had climbed those narrow spiral stairs and asked for me. The letters after his name alone were enough to produce a commotion in that democratic atmosphere. . . . He was staying at the Brevoort House, and he certainly behaved "like a man," thought Kay and I, as we enjoyed more than one good dinner at his expense in the hotel. Proud of me he had certainly no cause to be, but if he felt ashamed, equally, he gave no sign of it. He even spoke on my behalf to Paul Dana, the editor-proprietor's son, who assured him that I was "a bright fellow"—a description the staff managed to get hold of somehow and applied to me ever afterwards. His brief visit, both because of its kindness and its general good effect, stand out, at any rate, in the "bright fellow's" memory. Like Dufferin in the Hub, he fired a shot for me.

The months dragged by in their dreary, hated length, while numerous chances of getting more congenial work were tried in vain. Torrid summer heat, with its all-dissolving humidity, replaced the bitter winter. The deep, baked streets that never cooled, the stifling nights, the heat-waves when the temperature stood between 90 and 100 in the shade, and we toiled about the blazing pavements in shirt-sleeves carrying a palm-leaf fan, and when the moisture in the air made the very "copy-paper" stick to the hand that wrote upon it—those four months of New York summer were a misery. We had only our winter clothes to wear; a white collar was dirty pulp before nine in the morning; the dazzling electric-light sign flashed nightly in the air above 23rd Street with its tempting legend "Manhattan Beach Swept by Ocean Breezes," while the ice-carts in the streets were the nearest approach to comfort we could find. Many a time I followed one at close quarters to taste a whiff of cooler air. Life became unendurable, yet day followed day, night followed night, week followed week, till one's last breath of energy seemed exhausted by the steaming furnace of the city air.

The respectable quarters of the town were, of course, deserted, but the East Side, and the poorer parts, became a gigantic ant-heap, thousands of families sleeping on the balconies of the packed tenement houses, as though a whole underground-world had risen suddenly to the surface. Children died by the hundred; there were heat strokes by the score. It was too hot to eat. Reporting in such weather was a trying business. . . . A reporter was entitled to a fortnight's holiday in the year, and though none was due to me, McCloy let me go about the middle of October. I procured a railway pass and went off to Haliburton, Ontario, to spend my precious twelve days with a settler in the backwoods. He was a Scotsman I had met during our island days, and Haliburton was not far from our own delightful lake. . . . On my way back the cable came telling of my father's death while being brought home from Ems. I was spending the night

with an old friend of his, in Hamilton, Ont., where he had a church. Originally in the navy, the evangelical movement had "converted" him, and he had taken to it with such zeal that a church and parish became a necessity of life. He was sincere and sympathetic, and the bad news could have come to me in no better place.

The next day I returned to New York and resumed my life of reporting on the paper. . . . The elections had been fought, and Tammany was beaten, a wave of Republicanism sweeping both State and City. A Committee of Investigation, under Senator Lexow, was appointed to examine into the methods of Tammany Hall, and for weeks I sat in court while the testimony was taken, and the most amazing stories of crime, corruption, wickedness and horror I ever heard were told by one "protected" witness after another. It brought to light a veritable Reign of Terror. John Goff was prosecuting counsel; he became Recorder, in place of Judge Smythe, as his reward. Boss Croker, head of Tammany, was conveniently in England and could not be subpœnaed. Other leaders, similarly, were well out of reach. Tammany, it was proved up to the hilt, had extorted an annual income of fifteen million dollars in illegal contributions from vice. The court was a daily theatre in which incredible melodrama and tragedy were played. With this thrilling exception, the work I had to do remained the same as before . . . a second Christmas came round . . . another spring began to melt the gloomy skies. Conditions, it is true, were a little easier, for Louis had left us and Kay was earning ten or fifteen dollars a week in Exchange Place, but by March or April, the eighteen months of underfeeding and trying work had brought me, personally, to the breaking point. . . .

It was late in April I read that gold had been found in the Rainy River district which lay in the far northwestern corner of Ontario, the river of that name being the frontier between Minnesota State and Canada. The paragraph stating the fact was in a Sunday paper I read on my way to Bronx Park, and the instant I saw it my

mind was made up. It was spring, the primitive instinct to strike camp and move on was in the blood, a nostalgia for the woods was in it too, and the prospect of another torrid, moist summer in the city at $15 a week was more than I could face. That scrap of news, at any rate, decided me. And, truth to tell, it was not so much the lure of gold that called me, as the lure of the wilderness. I longed to see the big trees again, to smell the old naked earth, to hear water falling and feel the great winds blow. . . . It was an irresistible call.

My one terror, as when I decided to buy the dairy two years before, was that someone would tell me there was no gold, that it was not worth going, or would prevent me in some other way. I deliberately hid from myself all unfavourable information, while I collected all possible items that might justify my intention. That same night I showed the paragraph to Kay. "I'll go," he said at once, "but let's get a third, a fourth too, if we can." He mentioned Paxton, an engineer, aged 35, who had just lost all his worldly possessions in speculation. Paxton said he would come with us. The fourth was R.M., son of the clergyman in Hamilton. R.M., whose father was brother to a belted earl, was an insurance agent, and making a good living at his job. He was my own age, also my own height. He was, besides, a heavy-weight amateur boxer of considerable prowess, and his favourite time for holding bouts in the ring was Sunday evenings, to which fact a rival clergyman had recently taken occasion to refer slightingly in his own pulpit. R.M., resenting the slur both upon himself and his father, had waited outside the church door one Sunday after the evening service, and when the clergyman emerged had asked for an apology—a public one in the pulpit. On being met with an indignant refusal, R.M. invited the other to "put 'em up." The thrashing that followed produced a great scandal in the little town, and R.M. found the place too hot to hold him. He therefore jumped at the idea of the goldfields.

The arrangements were made, of course, by letter,

and took some little time; but on a given morning in early May R.M. was to join our train as it passed through Hamilton. I had been able to procure passes for the lot of us as far as Duluth, some fifteen hundred miles distant, on Lake Superior, and from there we should have to travel another hundred and fifty miles by canoe down the Vermilion River to Rainy Lake City, for the foundations of which the forest, I read, had already been partially cleared. Several further articles had appeared in the papers; it was a gorgeous country, men were flocking in, and the Bank of Montreal had established a branch in a temporary shack. Moreover, as mentioned before, it was spring.

That a man of Paxton's age and experience should have made this long expedition without first satisfying himself that it was likely to be worth while, has always puzzled me. He was an easy-going, good-natured man, whose full figure proclaimed that he liked the good things of life. But he was in grave difficulties, graver perhaps than I ever knew, and I think he was not sorry to contemplate a trip across the border. His attitude, at any rate, was that he "didn't care a rap so long as I get out of here." That Kay and myself and R.M. should take the adventure was natural enough, for none of us had anything to lose, and, whatever happened, we should "get along somehow," and even out of the frying-pan into the fire was better than the summer furnace of the city. R.M. wrote that he had a hundred dollars, Paxton produced fifty, I supplied the railway passes and added my last salary, together with some eight dollars that Ikey No. 2 was persuaded to hand over.

"Send some stuff along," fired McCloy, opening his eyes a little wider than usual when I told him. "Any hot stuff you get I'll use."

It has already been told how Kay missed the train by a few minutes, and how Whitey, waving his parting present of a bottle of Bourbon whisky, was the final picture Paxton and I had of New York City as the evening train pulled out.

CHAPTER XXVII

SOME people, examining the alternate ups and downs of life, have thought to detect a rhythm in it: like every other expression of energy, from heat to history, from sound to civilization, it moves, they think, with a definite wave-length. The down and up, the hollow of the wave and its crest, follow one another in rhythmical sequence. It is an imaginary notion doubtless, though it applied to my life aptly enough at this time apparently: the Toronto misery, the Island happiness; the New York hell, the Backwoods heaven.

I think, when I wrote home the literal truth: "I can't stand this reporting life any longer. I'm off to the goldfields, and McCloy has asked me to write articles for the paper," there lay a vague idea in me that these goldfields would prove somehow to be comic goldfields, and that the expedition would be somewhere farcical. I was so eager, so determined to go, that I camouflaged from myself every unfavourable aspect of the trip. Green, being still my predominant colour, was used freely in this camouflage. It was only afterwards I realized how delightfully I fooled myself. Yet it was true, at the same time, that a deep inner necessity drove irresistibly. The city life was killing something in me, something in the soul: get out or go under, was my feeling. How easy it would have been to go under was a daily thought. Far better men than myself proved it all round me every week. It seemed, indeed, the natural, obvious thing to do for an educated, refined Englishman without character who found himself adrift from home influences in this amazing city—to sink into the general scum of failures and outcasts, to yield to one of the many anæsthetics New York so lavishly provided, to find temporary relief, a brief wild-eyed happiness, oblivion, then, not long afterwards, death.

The draw of the woods, the call of the open air, moreover, always potent, had become insistent. Spring added its aching nostalgia that burned like a fever in my veins.

Thus various influences, some positive, some negative, combined to make me feel that anything was better than the drudgery of my wretched New York life, and the goldfields merely offered a plausible excuse. If I made blinkers with my own hands, I made them effectively at least. Deep out of sight in the personality there hides, perhaps, some overseer who, watching wisely the turns of fate, makes such blinkers, ensuring their perfect fit as well. . . .

There was a nice feeling, of course, that if one went to a goldfield, one picked up gold. Shaking sand in a shining pan beside a rushing river was a picture in the mind. There were wild men, friends and enemies; there were Indians too; but also there were sunsets, tempests, dawns and stars. It would be liberty and happiness. I should see the moon rise in clear, sweet air above the rim of primæval woods. I should cook bacon over an open fire of wood. There would be no grinning Chinaman to pay for laundry. . . .

The men with whom I was going were not entirely satisfactory. I knew them slightly, for one thing; for another, the chief drawback, they were going in a very different mood from mine. Their one object was to make their fortunes. It was real gold, and not the glamour of the wilderness, that called them; and in the Emigrant Sleeper, as we journeyed towards Duluth, they sketched their plans with intense enthusiasm: Paxton, the engineer, explained puzzlingly, with the aid of matches, a trolley he would construct for bringing the ore from pit to crusher, while R.M., with reckless immorality, enlarged upon the profits he would derive from running a "joint" of desperate sort—"for no one need know that my father's a clergyman, and my uncle in the House of Lords."

Both men were shadows; they were not real; there was no companionship in them for me, at any rate. That

they were fellow-travellers for the moment on a trip I did not care about making alone, was sufficient. I would just as soon have gone with McCloy or a Tombs policeman.

What constitutes one person out of a hundred "real," the other ninety-nine shadows, is hard to define, but an instinct in me has ever picked out that "real" one. With him or her I know instantly my life is going to be unavoidably linked: through love or hate, through happiness or trouble, perhaps through none of these, but with the conviction that a service has to be rendered or accepted, a debt, as it were, to be paid or received, a link at any rate that cannot be broken or evaded. Such real people are to be counted on the fingers of one hand: R.M. and Paxton were certainly not among them. Nor, for that matter, was my friend Kay, who, I am reasonably positive, missed the train on purpose; while, curiously enough, Boyde, that trivial criminal, *was* among them. Had Kay, for instance, done what that cheap ruffian did, I should never have taken the trouble to arrest or punish him. . . .

The comic opera touch began with Whitey racing down the platform waving a bottle of rye whisky; it continued next morning when we picked up R.M. at eight o'clock. Our train stopped at Hamilton, Ont., for five minutes. We craned our heads out of the window and saw a party of young fellows with flushed faces and singing voices, and on their shoulders in the early sunshine the inert figure of a huge man without a hat. They recognized me and heaved him into our compartment, where he slept soundly for two hours until we had left Toronto far behind. "Ouch! Ouch!" said Paxton—it was about all "engineer Paxton" ever did say—"Is that R.M.?" They had never met before. We took the money out of his pocket for safety's sake, and it proved to be more than his promised contribution. His friends had indeed given him a send-off, and the all-night poker had proved lucrative.

It was a long, long journey to Duluth, with heartening

glimpses from the window, of river, lake and forest, all touched with "spring's delightful weather." Shelley filled my head and heart. I saw dawn in a vale of the Indian Caucasus, I saw Panthea, Asia, fleeting dryads and troops of happy fauns. Out of New York City into this primæval wilderness produced intoxication. No more cities of dreadful night for me! The repressed, unrealized yearnings of many painful months burst forth in a kind of rapture. Riches can never taste the treasures of relief and change provided by the law of contrast. To be free to go everywhere is tantamount to going nowhere, to be able to do everything is to do nothing. Without school, holidays could have no meaning. The intensity of escape, with all the gorgeous emotions it involves, is hardly possible to the big bank-balances.

I thought of the overheated *Sun* offices, and saw cool, silent woods; of thronged canyon-streets between cliffs of buildings, and saw lonely gorges where the deer stole down to drink in quiet pools; of Mrs. Bernstein's room, and saw green glades of beauty, a ceiling of blue sky, walls of hemlock, spruce and cedar. The May sunlight made the whole world sing, as the train rushed through the wilderness of the Ontario Highlands. It woke a kind of lyrical delight in me. "The day seemed one sent from beyond the skies, that shed to earth, above the sun, a light of Paradise." Paxton, with his puzzling matches, found me absent-minded and irresponsive to his "ouch! ouch!" and R.M., suffering from a bad "hang-over" headache, thought me unsympathetic toward his disreputable joint.

More clearly than the matches, or the profit and loss figures of the joint, I remember the three bullets lying on the palm of the engineer's fat open hand. His solemn gravity depressed R.M. It infected me a little too. Why in the world should he be so serious? "If we fail, boys," said the engineer laconically, as he looked down with grim significance at the three bullets, "I for one—shall not return." He put a bullet in his pocket, he handed one to R.M., the third he passed to me. "Is it a deal?"

he asked, speaking as one who had come to the end of his tether, which, indeed, perhaps really was the case. We pocketed our bullets anyhow, and told him gravely: "Yes, it's a deal." We shook hands on it.

It was all in the proper spirit of gold-seeking adventure, begad! and the comic-opera touch, so far as I was concerned, had not yet quite fully appeared. I had cut loose from everything. I felt as though I were jumping off the rim of the planet into unknown space. It was a delightful, reckless, half naughty, half childish, feeling. "To hell with civilization!" was its note. At the back of the mind lay a series of highly-coloured pictures: Men made fortunes in a night, human life was cheap, six-shooters lay beside tin mugs at camp-fire breakfasts, and bags of "dust" were tossed across faro-tables from one desperado in a broad-brimmed hat to another who was either an Oxford don *incognito*, or an unfrocked clergyman, or a younger son concealing tragic beauty in an over-cultured heart, with perhaps an unclaimed title on his strawberry-marked skin. R.M., too, was forever talking about staking claims: "We'll get grub-staked by some fellow. . . . If we only pan a few ounces per day it'll mean success. . . ." to all of which Paxton emitted his "Ouch! Ouch!" as a strong man who said little because he preferred action to words.

I, meanwhile, had no accurate information to supply, though I was the promoter of the expedition. I paraded the newspaper accounts. They were of little use. Nothing, in fact, was of any use. We were in different worlds. *They* were in an Emigrant Sleeper skirting the shores of Lake Superior. *I* was on the look-out for the Witch of Atlas, wandering through the pine forest of the Cascine near Pisa, dreaming in the Indian Caucasus, or watching Serchio's stream. Even "Ouch! Ouch!" could not keep me in Ontario for long.

It all lies down the wrong end of that ever-lengthening telescope now, our trip to the Rainy River Gold Fields. Happy, careless, foolish days of sunlight, liberty, woodsmoke and virgin wilderness. Useless days, of course,

yet sweetly perfumed as in a dream of fairyland. I revelled in them. New York was still close enough to lend them some incredible glamour by contrast. That no gold came our way was nothing, that the days came to an end was bitter. Fading into mist, behind veils of blue smoke, yet lit by sheets of burning sunshine, lies the faint outline still. Each year drops another gauze curtain over an entrancing and ridiculous adventure that for my companions was disappointingly empty, but to me was filled to the brim with wonder and delight. A few sharp pictures, rather disconnected, defy both veils and curtains, set against a dim background of wild forest, a blue winding river with strange red shores, swift rapids, and cosy camp-fires at dawn, at sunset, beneath the stars, beneath the moon. The stillness of those grand woods is unforgettable; the voice of the river was unceasing, yet broke no silence; the smells of balsam, resinous pitch-pine, cedar smoke rise like incense above the memory of it all.

Duluth was all agog with excitement, and in every shop-window hung blue-prints of the El Dorado we were bound for. Two big-bladed hunting-knives, a second-hand Marlin rifle for $8, a Smith and Wesson revolver, were our weapons. I already had a six-shooter, given to me by the Tombs Court police. It had killed a negro, and I had reported the murder trial resulting. Three blankets had to be bought, a canoe, and provisions for the week's trip down the Vermilion River—tea, bacon, flour, biscuits, salt and sugar. R.M. had a small "A" tent with him large enough to hold three; an old, high-prowed bark canoe was purchased from an Indian for $6; but our money did not run to Hudson Bay blankets, and the cheap, thin coverings we bought proved poor protection in those frosty nights of early May.

We picked up a guide too, a half-breed named Gallup. He was going to Rainy Lake City in any case, and agreed to show us the portages and rapids for two dollars a day each way. He justified his name. He galloped. He had a slim-nosed Maine cedar-wood canoe that oiled along

into the daily head-wind with easy swiftness, whereas R.M. and myself in our high-prowed craft found progress slow and steering a heavy toil. The wind caught our big bows like a sail. Gallup, moreover, sizing us up as English greenhorns, expected good food and lots of whisky, and, getting neither, vented his spleen on us as best he could. His natural evil temper grew steadily worse. There were several ways in which he could have revenge. He used them all. By "losing his way" down branch streams he made the journey last eight days instead of five, yet he went so fast in his neat-nosed craft that it was all R.M. and I could do to keep him in sight at all. The sunlight flashing on his paddle two or three miles ahead, the canoe itself a mere dark speck in the dazzle of water, was all we usually had to guide us. Paxton, weary, much thinner than he had been, useless as a paddler, lay in the bottom of the canoe, leaving all the work to Gallup. And Gallup did it, even with this dead freight against him. To our injunction to make the fellow go slower, his "Ouch! Ouch!" was quite ineffective. I was careful to keep the provisions in my own canoe, so that we could not lose him altogether, and he was faithful in one thing, that he waited for us at the rapids and portages.

What did it matter? The head wind held steadily day after day, blowing from the north-west through a cloudless sky. Everything sparkled, the air was champagne; such a winding river of blue I had never seen before. Every tree wore little fingers of bright fresh green. There was exhilaration and wonder at every turn. Burned by the hot sun and wet by the flying spray, our hands swelled till the knuckles disappeared, then cracked between the joints till they bled.

I steered. R.M. sat in the bows. Paddling hour after hour against the wind became a mechanical business the muscles attended to automatically. The mind was free to roam. The loneliness was magical, for it was a peopled loneliness. A start at dawn, half an hour for lunch, and camp at sunset was the day's routine. Usually we were

too exhausted to cook the dwindling bacon, make the fire, put up the tent. What did it matter? Nothing mattered. Each mile was a mile of delight farther from New York. The trip might last months for all I cared.

We cursed Gallup behind his back and to his face. He never even answered. His sulky silence broke only round the evening fire, when he would tell us appalling tales of murder, violence and sudden death about the goldfields whither we were bound. It was another form of revenge. The desperadoes, cutthroats, and wild hairy men generally who awaited us, *us* especially since we were English, hardly belonged to our happy planet. Yet he knew them at first hand, knew them even by name. They would all be on the look-out for us. Against several, for he had his friendly impulses, he warned us in particular. Were we good shots and quick on the trigger? The man who pulled first, he reminded us, had the drop on the other fellow. There was a "stiff" named Morris who was peculiarly deadly, Morris, a Canadian, who had killed his man in a saloon brawl across the river and had skipped over the border into Minnesota. Morris would be interested in "guys" like us. He described him in detail. We looked forward to Morris.

They were cheery camp-fire stories Gallup told us nightly. We crawled into our chilly tent, wondering a little, each in his own thin blanket, what these hairy men were going to do to "guys like us." We did not wonder long. Sleep came like a clap. At dawn, the wind just rising, and the chipmunks dropping fir-cones on to our tent with miniature reports, the hairy men were all forgotten. It was impossible to hold an ugly thought of any kind. The river sang at our feet, the sky was pearl and rose, the air was sharply perfumed with smells of forest and wood-smoke, and glimpses of sunrise shone everywhere between the trees; trees that stretched without a break five hundred miles to the shores of James Bay in the arctic seas.

We gulped our tea and bacon, packed tent and blankets, split open the cracks in our swollen hands, and launched

the canoes upon a crystal river that swirled along in eddies and sheets of colour. Sometimes it narrowed to a couple of hundred yards between rugged cliffs where the water raced towards a rapid, sometimes it broadened into wide, lake-like spaces; there were reaches of placid calm; there were stretches white with tumbling foam. The sun blazed down; we turned a sharp bend and surprised a deer; a porcupine waddled up against a pine-stem; a fish leaped in a golden pool; birds flashed and vanished; there was a silence, a stillness beyond all telling. Nuggets, gold dust, hairy men, six-shooters—nothing mattered!

It was, indeed, this loneliness, this entire absence of all other human signs, that gradually betrayed the truth. Where was the stream of frenzied gold-seekers? Where was the rush the papers mentioned? Beyond a few stray Indians on the fourth day, we saw no living being. Gallup's tales of terror began to lose their sting. Of real information he vouchsafed no single item. But who wanted real information? Rainy Lake City might be the legendary city of gold that lies beyond the mirages of the Lybian desert, for all I cared. The City of New York was out of sight. That was the important thing.

The series of wild, lonely camps lie blurred in the composite outline of a single camp; eight dawns combine into one; I remember clear night-skies ablaze with brilliant stars; I remember the moon rising behind the black wall of forest across the water. All night the river sang and whispered. Police courts and Mrs. Bernstein's room hid far away in the dim reaches of some former life. Behind these, again, lay a shadowy, forgotten Kent. There were haunting faces, veiled by distance, for a strange remoteness curtained the past with unreality. The wonder of the present dominated. These woods, this river, ruled the world, and somewhere in the heart of that old forest the legendary Wendigo, whose history I wrote later in a book, had its awful lair.

Owing to Gallup's trick of lengthening the journey, our food gave out, but with fish, venison and partridge

it was impossible to starve. The last-named, a grouse actually, perches in the branches, waiting to be shot; a bullet must take its head off or it is useless for the pot, but whizzing bullets do not disturb it, and several birds, sitting close together, can be picked off *seriatim*. Some dried sturgeon we found, too, on an island—an Indian sturgeon fishery—where great odorous strips were hanging in the sun. The braves were away, and the squaw left in charge was persuaded to sell us slabs of this excellent meat. In a deep, clear pool some half-dozen living monsters, hooked by the nose, turned slowly round and round, waiting the moment of their death. The island was interesting for another reason—it was an Indian canoe factory. Here the Redskins built their craft of birch-bark, and a dozen canoes in various stages of completion lay in the broiling sun. . . . To me it was all visible romance, adventure, wonder in the heart of an unspoilt spring, with Hiawatha round the next big bend. Paxton and R.M. took another view. . . .

On the eighth night—our last, had we known it—there was an "incident." Gallup had been unusually silent and extra offensive all day, had "galloped" at top speed, had refused to answer a single question, and the idea came to us all three simultaneously that he was not losing his way with the mere object of more money, but was taking us out of our route with a more sinister purpose. We depended on the fellow entirely; words or violence were equally useless; we were quite helpless. He was convinced we carried money, for no three Englishmen of our type would make such a trip without it. What was easier, we whispered to one another, than to murder us and bury our bodies in the trackless, lonely forest? We watched him. . . .

That night, exhausted to the bone, we camped on a point of wooded shore against the sunset. Across the broad reach of water, three miles away perhaps, was an Indian encampment. Pointed wigwams and the smoke of many fires were visible; voices were audible in the distance. The wind had died down as usual with the

sun. A deep hush lay over the scene. And, hardly had we landed, almost too weary to drag ourselves up the bank, when Gallup stepped back into his Maine canoe and pushed off downstream without a word. He stood upright; he did not sit or kneel. His figure was outlined one minute against the red sky, the next his silhouette merged into the dark forest beyond. He disappeared.

He had gone, we agreed, for one of two reasons: to get food, or to return in the dark and pick us off, much as we picked off the grouse from the branches. We inclined towards the latter theory—and kept eyes and ears wide open. We made a diminutive fire in a hollow, lest we be too visible in the surrounding darkness. We listened, watched, and waited. It was already dusk. The night fell quickly. River and forest became an impenetrable sheet of blackness, our tiny fire, almost too small to cook on, the only speck of light. The stars came out, peeping through the branches. There was no wind. We shivered in the cold, listening for every slightest sound . . . and the hours passed.

"He'll wait till we're asleep," said R.M., keeping his eyes open with the greatest difficulty. Paxton fingered his revolver and mumbled "Ouch! Ouch!"

Only the cold prevented us falling asleep, as, weapons in hand, we took turns to watch and listen. Had we the right to fire the instant we saw a figure? Should we wait till the scoundrel made a sign? We discussed endlessly in whispers. Though no wind stirred the branches, the noises in that "silent" forest never ceased, because no forest ever is, or can be, really silent. The effort of listening produced them by the dozen. On every side twigs snapped and dry wood crackled. Soft, stealthy footsteps were everywhere on the pine-needles. Canoes landed higher up and lower down; paddles dripped out in the river as someone approached; sometimes two or three dim figures crouched low on the shore, sometimes only one. Finally, for safety's sake, we let the fire go out altogether.

Armed to the teeth, we were still shivering in the cold darkness well on into the night, and at some distance from the dying embers, when suddenly—we nearly screamed—there was a sound of a voice. It was a man's voice; he was angry; he was cursing. A flame shot up beneath the trees. We saw Gallup on his knees blowing up the hemlock coals. He had landed, pulled his canoe on to the bank, and come up to within a few yards of where we stood without our hearing the faintest sound. He said no word. He cooked himself no food. He just made a huge fire, spread his blanket beside the comforting blaze, curled up, and fell asleep. We soon followed his example. Probably he had enjoyed a square meal with the Indians, then sauntered home to bed. . . . Next day we reached Rainy Lake City, paid him off, and saw him push off upstream in his Maine canoe without having uttered a single word. He just counted the dollar bills and vanished.

Rainy Lake City was a few acres roughly cleared from the primæval forest, yet with avenues cut through the dense trees to indicate streets where tramcars were to run at some future date. River, lake and forest combined to make an enchanting scene. There were perhaps a hundred men there. There was gold, but there was no gold-dust, no shining pans to sift the precious sand; in a word, no placer-mining. It was all quartz; machinery to crush the quartz had to be dragged in over the ice in the winter. Capital was essential, large lumps of capital. A word of inquiry in New York could have told me this. I felt rather guilty, but very happy. Paxton and R.M. were philosophical. No word of blame escaped their lips. They had the right to curse me, whereas both played the part of Balaam. Even at the time I thought this odd. Neither of them seemed to care a straw. "We'll stake a claim," said R.M. at intervals. Perhaps both were so pleased to have arrived safely that they neither grumbled nor abused me. The truth was that, like myself, though for rather different reasons, both of them were relieved to be "away from home." The engineer,

I discovered later, was glad that 1,500 miles lay between him and New York City.

We pitched our tent by the shore and proceeded to investigate. Living cost little. It was sunny weather, it was spring. One company was already sinking a shaft and working a small crusher; there were shacks and shanties everywhere; the "city" was as peaceful as the inside of St. Paul's Cathedral; we saw no hairy men, but we saw mosquitoes. With the first warm nights these pests emerged for the season in their millions; they were very large and very hungry; they hung in the air like clouds of smoke; they welcomed us; as R.M. said, they had probably written the newspaper accounts that advertised the place. We had no netting. They stung the bears blind; they would have stung a baby to death, had there been any babies, except ourselves, to sting. The only gold we saw was a lump, valued at $5,000, lying beside a revolver on the counter of the Bank of Montreal's shack. The clerk allowed us to hold it for a second each. It was the only gold we touched. . . . We investigated, as mentioned; we wandered about; we fished and shot, we rubbed Indian stuff over our faces to keep the mosquitoes off; we enjoyed happy, careless, easy days, bathing in ice-cold water, basking in hot sunshine, resting, loafing, and spinning yarns with all and sundry round our camp-fires. After New York it was a paradise, and but for the mosquitoes, we could have dressed in fig leaves.

Except for the question of having enough money to get out again before the iron winter set in towards October, we might have spent the whole summer there. We decided to leave while it was still possible. To paddle a hundred and fifty miles against the stream was not attractive. We would do the trip on foot. Selling tent and canoe to the clerk in the bank, we set out across the Twenty-Six Mile Portage one day towards the end of June. A party of five men, also bound for Duluth, joined us, and one of them was—Morris.

Those happy, unproductive goldfields! That un-

tenanted Rainy Lake City where no tramcars ever ran, nor faro-tables flourished! Morris, the hairy desperado! In the dismal New York days that followed they seemed to belong to some legendary Golden Age. Romance and adventure, both touched with comedy, went hand in hand, beauty and liberty heightening some imagined radiance. Wasted time, of course, but for that very reason valuable beyond computation. Stored memories are stored energy that may prove the raw material of hope in days that follow after. Even Morris, the "stiff," and cut-throat, played his little part in the proper spirit. There was a price on his head in Canada. We watched him closely; we watched his partners too. The Twenty-Six Mile Portage cut off an immense bend of the Vermilion River, running through the depths of trackless, gloomy forest the whole way. Nothing was easier than to "mix us up with the scenery" as a phrase of those parts expressed it. Especially must we be on our guard at night. One of us must always only pretend to sleep. Our former mistake about Gallup need not make us careless. A natural instinct to dramatize the expedition might have succeeded better if Morris, the villain, had not sometimes missed his cue and failed to realize the importance of his rôle.

The scenery, at any rate, was right. The weather broke the very day we started, and the region justified its translated Indian name. A drenching rain fell sousing on the world. With our heavy packs we made slow progress, crawling in single file beneath the endless dripping trees, soaked to the skin in the first ten minutes. There was no trail, but Morris had a compass. Darkness fell early on the first night when we had covered barely six miles. Morris found a deserted lumbermen's shanty. One man chopped down a pitch-pine and cut out its dry heart of resinous wood which caught fire instantly; another soaked a shred of cedar-wood in a tin mug filled with melted bacon fat; a third cooked dinner for the whole party; and by eight o'clock we all lay grouped about the fire, dodging the streams of water that splashed through the gaping remnants of the pine-log roof.

Outside in that windless forest the drip of the rain was like the sound of waterfalls, but it was a magnificent, a haunted, a legendary forest none the less. Our shanty was faintly lit by the flickering cedar-candle. Queer shadows danced, eyes glittered, the faces here and there seemed distorted oddly in the shifting flame and darkness that alternately rose and fell. One by one, dog-tired, we fell asleep. It was R.M.'s turn to watch. Before supper was ended even, he lay soundly slumbering, his head, with touselled hair and ragged beard, thrown back against the wall, his mouth, containing unswallowed food—so weary was he—half-open. I exchanged a significant glance with Paxton over his collapsed body, meaning that we must watch instead.

Our steaming clothes dried slowly as the night wore on. The dripping trickle of the trees became louder and louder. Paxton, very thin now, looked like a scarecrow in his ragged shirt and coat. His customary exclamation was rarely heard. He fell asleep in turn. The rest of the party had been snoring for an hour or more. It was up to me to watch.

I watched. The next thing I knew was a sudden stealthy movement, and a low voice that woke me out of a slumber made of lead. The fire was low, the candle hardly flickered. Across the gloom I saw the movement that had waked me—Morris, the hairy man, was stirring. I watched him. He sat up. He leaned cautiously over—towards R.M. His hand stretched out slowly. Splendid fellow! I felt furious with R.M. for falling asleep, for keeping his mouth open in that idiotic way. Stupid idiot and faithless comrade! Morris, I saw, was doing something to his bulky, motionless figure, just about to slit him open perhaps. Well, let him slit! It was the head he touched. He was doing something to the sleeper's head—pushing it—pushing it sideways so that a stream of water through the roof might just miss falling on his shoulder and thus splashing the hairy man's own face with spray. I watched closely, faithful to my job. I saw Morris the Stiff take a bit of spare clothing out of his

pack and hang it over R.M.'s neck and shoulder. "I got no use for it," he was saying. "Yer friend might jest as well hev it." He knew, therefore, quite well that I was watching. But R.M. knew nothing, less than nothing. He neither stirred nor woke. A more kindly, tender-hearted fellow than Morris the Stiff, no traveller in wild places could possibly desire.

It was perhaps a couple of hours later when I woke again, disturbed this time not by noise, but by the sudden absence of it. One winter's night the inhabitants of Niagara, similarly, woke up because, ice having formed, the thunder of the falls had ceased. I listened a moment, then went out. The rain had ceased, the clouds were gone, in a clear sky the three-quarter moon shone brightly. The rain-washed air seemed perfumed beyond belief. Nor did the old moon merely "look round her when the heavens were bare," she sprawled fantastically at full length, as it were, in her magnificent blue-black bed of naked space. I went out to a clear spot among the trees. Far away rose a soft murmur. The air hummed and shook with the roar of distant rapids, so calm and still the night was. No bird, no animal cried. The earth herself, it seemed, stopped turning in that wonderful stillness. Those few minutes painted a picture that memory must always keep. . . .

Three months later the first week in October found us in New York again. The bullets were forgotten and, of course, unmentioned, and five months of glorious wasted time lay safely behind us.

CHAPTER XXVIII

IF it is impossible to recapture the boyish moods of those early days, it is also difficult not to import into these notes the point of view and feelings that belong to later life. Surely, but gradually, the scale of time changes with the years, and with it the range and quality of the emotions: to-day, a year seems a very brief period; the few months spent in the woods after our Gold Fields fiasco seemed both an eternity, yet far too brief. A faint flavour of childhood's immense scale, when twelve months was an immeasurable stretch of time, still clung to them, perhaps.

But the magnet of New York drew us. Any idea of returning to England until I had made good was far from me. We arrived in the detested city late in October, with livings to earn, and with less money than when we had first come two years before. We took separate rooms this time, for I had learned my lesson about sharing beds and clothes and scanty earnings. It was to be each man for himself. Paxton disappeared immediately; only occasionally did I hear his "Ouch, Ouch!" again; M. found a bed in Harlem and started to teach boxing; I took quarters in East 21st Street, on the top floor of a cheap but cleanish house, and arranged for breakfast and dinner in a neighbouring boarding-house at $2.50 a week.

Two Germans lived in the adjoining attic. Through the thin wooden partition I heard their talk, their breathing, their slightest movement. They rarely came to bed before midnight; they talked the whole night through. Informing them in a loud voice that I understood their language made no difference; they neither stopped nor answered. Yet, oddly enough, I never once saw them; never met them on the stairs, nor in the hall, nor at the front door. They remained invisible, if not inaudible. But I formed vivid pictures of them, and knew from their

conversation that they were not better than they need be. An old man and a young one, I gathered. An unpleasant house altogether, the low rent more easily explained than I at first guessed. Long afterwards I had my revenge upon those unsavoury Germans—by writing an awful story about them, "A Case of Eavesdropping," though by the time it was published they were probably either dead or in gaol. A sinister couple, these invisible Teutons!

My one main object was to avoid the *Evening Sun:* any work was better, I felt, than a return to that hated sensational reporting. A place was always open to me under McCloy, but my detestation of the police court, and of the criminal atmosphere generally, was so strong that I would rather have taken a street-cleaning job under Tammany than go back to it. I therefore began by trying free-lance work, gathering news items and selling them for a dollar or two apiece to various papers, writing snippets of description, inventing incidents, and earning perhaps ten dollars a week on the average. It was hard going, but pawning and free lunches in the saloons made it possible to live. I knew all the tricks by now; I used them. The blanket off my bed occasionally spent a week-end with a new "Ikey," though getting it out of the house and back again was no easy matter, while the smell of the moth-balls I always expected must betray me. It was a poor blanket, too, worth only 50 cents from Ikey's point of view, and certainly not worth the foolish risk involved. For, literally—though this never once occurred to me at the time—it was stealing, and the fact that I told Ikey where it came from, hoping to extract thereby an extra half-dollar from him, could not have exonerated me if the landlady had met me on the stairs. Personally, I think the quantity of food I devoured at the free lunch counters in exchange for a five-cent glass of lager was a more flagrant case of theft. Only it was a recognized theft. The temporary absence of the blanket, anyhow, since I made my own bed, was never discovered, and my heart remained innocent of conscious burglary.

A dozen years before, aged 12, I had once been accused of stealing by the headmaster of the private school I adorned in Sevenoaks. I was innocent, but the evidence was both ludicrous and damning, so damning, indeed, that, strangely, I *felt* guilty and accepted the punishment. A terrifying experience, it haunted me for years, and the sight of a policeman, or the words "criminal judge," sent shivers down my spine long afterwards. When a little older, I came to suspect that it was worked up against me by the master to curry favour with an influential parent; but at the actual time I had visions even of prison—for something I had not done. All about a poem, too!

At evening "prep" a "bit of poetry," as we called it, had to be learnt by heart; my own poetry book was lost; I borrowed young Gildea's. The last thing in the world I wanted to own was that poetry book of young Gildea, the last thing I wanted to do was to learn that poem by heart. I spent the hour, therefore, inscribing my name with elaborate flourishes on the title page. Twice I wrote it, with capitals, of which I was very proud; I thought it ornate and beautiful; and when the hour was over I tossed the book into my locker and forgot all about it. Next morning I was summoned into the headmaster's presence. He wore red whiskers about an otherwise clean-shaven face: a face of natural sternness, with a big nose, a mouth of iron, and steely blue eyes. He was a clergyman of evangelical persuasion.

I had no idea why I had been summoned, but his glance made me at once feel uneasy.

"Blackwood minor," he said in a solemn and portentous voice, "did you do—*this?*" He held out Gildea's poetry book towards me with the cover open. His finger pointed to my name in pencil, flourishes and all.

I was completely puzzled as to what was coming, but I admitted the signature of course.

"Is the book yours?" he asked. I said it was not. "Gildea has reported the loss of his own copy," the voice of doom went on. "It has been found—*in your locker*—

and with *your name written* in it." The voice made me think of "and God spake" in the Bible.

He looked at me in such a way that I felt sure I was going to be flogged. What had I done? And why? I couldn't quite remember. No explanation came to me. The simple truth was too silly to mention. I had nothing to say except to admit everything. The man, with his awful manner and appalling aspect, terrified me. I stood speechless and paralysed, wondering what was coming next. The red whiskers made me think of Satan.

I little dreamed, however, that the headmaster would say what he then did say. He spoke with a terribly slow, deliberate emphasis.

"This is as grave a case of stealing," fell the awful words of judgment, "as ever came before a *Criminal Judge*. I have sent for your father."

I was petrified. It was enough to frighten any boy into his boots.

My father in due course arrived; Gildea's parents, both of them, arrived likewise; there were consultations, mysterious comings and goings; it was a day of gloom and terror; for some reason I made no attempt to defend myself; it all flabbergasted, frightened, puzzled me beyond understanding. I was made to confess to Gildea and to apologize to the parents. To my own father I said nothing. He looked troubled, yet somehow not as grave as he ought to have looked. Perhaps he had his doubts. . . . What that fiendish headmaster, whose name I will not mention, had said behind my back, I did not know, for my father never referred to the matter afterwards, and both I and my brother were removed from the school at the end of the term. But I was severely punished—sent to Coventry for three days—for doing something I had both done and had not done, and the phrase "Criminal Judge" was burnt into my memory with letters of fire. My revenge was rather an oblique one—a fight with that headmaster's son, though about quite another matter. With each blow I landed—and I landed several——I saw red whiskers on a boy about my own age!

This digression concerning a poetry book occurs to me only now, while telling of my wickedness about the blanket. The lesson that master wished to teach me had no effect, for the simple reason that I had *not* stolen. The fear, however, doubtless remained; the injustice scored deep, bitter wounds. I trace back to it a curious persistent dread, not entirely obliterated even now: the dread of being accused of a crime I have not committed; yet where the evidence of guilt seems overwhelming. Patanjali's "Aphorisms" describe a method of living through in imagination all possible experiences. A series of laborious incarnations would be necessary to exhaust these experiences in the ordinary way. They can be lived out in the mind instead. In imagination, anyhow, thanks to that little school injustice, I have often tried to *realize* the feelings of a man serving a term of imprisonment for a crime he has not committed. Patanjali's interesting method is, at any rate, a means of opening the mind to a sympathetic understanding of many an experience one could not otherwise know. Only imagination must be sustained and very detailed, and the projection of the personality is not easy.

An interlude of play-acting now enlivened my period of free-lance journalism. Kay was in my life again, and the opportunity came through him. He had spent the summer between odd jobs on the stage, and odd jobs at buying and selling exchange in Wall Street. He made both ends meet, at any rate, and had a cheap room in the purlieus of Hoboken across the river. A part in a third-rate touring company had just been offered to him, and he said he could get me a part as well. One-night stands in the smaller towns of New York State with a couple of plays, of which "Jim, the Penman," was one, formed the programme, and my utter ignorance of acting, he assured me, need not stand in the way. My salary would be $15 a week, with travelling expenses paid. Gilmour, the leading man, and organizer of the company, was anxious to find someone like myself.

I jumped at it. Gilmour looked me up and down

and said I'd do. I had only one line to say. I was a prison warder on sentry duty, pacing to and fro between the walls at night, when Gilmour, the hero, escaping from his cell, knocks me down after a brief struggle, and disappears into the night. A moment later the alarm is given; other warders arrive, find me wounded on the ground and ask which way the prisoner has gone. "That way," I shout, pointing the direction before losing consciousness; whereupon the curtain falls.

It was not an exacting part. Gilmour said I should make a "bully warder." My own shabby clothes, with a brown billycock hat, would do as they were. I was to carry a large wooden pistol. We rehearsed the scene, swaying to and fro, breathing hard, grunting with effort, cursing each other fiercely, until the prisoner, wrenching the pistol from me, struck me on the head and floored me. Such was my rôle.

I played it at Yonkers and Mount Vernon, three nights in each place, if memory serves me correctly, but "went through it" is the true description of my performance. For the theatre, either as a writer or actor, I possess no trace of talent, a fact rediscovered recently when playing an insignificant part in Drinkwater's "Oliver Cromwell" on tour with Henry Ainley. My dismissal at the end of the first week, however, was not due to this lack of skill—it was due to a pail of beer and the leading lady. For the leading lady, handsome daughter, I remember, of a Washington General, was the inspiration of the touring company, and it was for her *beaux yeux* that the enterprise was undertaken. Gilmour was what is known as "crazy" about her, his jealousy a standing joke among us, so that when those *beaux yeux* were turned upon my lanky, half-starved self, there were warnings that trouble might begin. But I was looking for salary and food rather than for trouble. In the dressing-room we underlings all shared together, though "dressing" was of negligible kind, I was quite safe. Chance meetings, however, were unavoidable, of course, and Bettina's instinct for adventure was distinctly careless. It was here the pail of beer came

in—into our crowded dressing-room. Who brought it, I have forgotten; the miscreant who stood treat to the band of hungry and thirsty Thespians is lost to memory. I only know that, empty of food as I was, my share of that gallon pail distinctly cheered me. The *beaux yeux* had been boldly rolling; another pair of eyes, not so lovely, had been rolling too. To be ungallantly honest about it, my own feelings were not engaged in any way, except on this particular night, when they were considerably roused —against that stupid, jealous Gilmour. The way he glared in my direction stirred my bile; the few glasses of beer made me reckless. When the escaping prisoner fought with me for the possession of the great wooden pistol, I refused to be "thrown."

The scanty audience that night witnessed a good performance of my brief, particular scene. Gilmour cursed and swore beneath his breath, but he was a smaller man than I was. He could do nothing with me. What was a shocking performance in one sense, was a realistic and sincere performance in another. Had my share of the pail been slightly bigger than it was, I should undoubtedly have "thrown" the prisoner and spoilt the curtain. As it was, however, Gilmour managed in the end to wrench the pistol from me, and in doing so, his fury genuine, he landed me a blow on the forehead with its heavy butt that stunned me. I fell. He fled. Roars of applause I heard dimly. My brown billycock hat, I remember, fell on its springy brim, bounced into the air, then hopped away against the footlights. And all my interest went with my precious hat. To the warders who at once rushed on with cries of "He's escaped! Which way did he go?" I used the right words, taking my cue correctly. Only I pointed in the wrong direction. I pointed towards my old hat against the footlights. It lay outside the curtain.

It is odd to think that somewhere in the under-mind of the individual who lay half-stunned on the stage of a Yonkers theatre, pointing wildly at a dilapidated, but precious, old brown billycock, slept a score of books, waiting

patiently for expression a few years later. It is difficult, indeed, as I write these notes, to realize that the individual who describes the incidents is the individual who experienced them. The body itself has changed every single physical particle at least four times in succession. Nor is the mind the same. With the exception of one or two main interests, easily handed on by the outgoing atoms to the incoming atoms in the brain, "I" possess little that the "I" of those distant New York days possessed. Even the continuity of memory is bequeathable by atoms leaving the brain to the new ones just arriving. Where, then, is the self who experienced years ago what the self holding this pen now sets down?

The "I," during the next few years, at any rate, went rolling; rolling from one experience to another, if not cheerily, at least resignedly. Whatever happened—and what happened was mostly unpleasant—there was never absent the conviction that it was deserved, and must be lived out in a spirit of acceptance, until finally exhausted. Any other attitude toward unwelcome events meant evasion, and a disagreeable experience shirked merely postponed it to another time, either in this life or another. There was, meanwhile, a *real* self that remained aloof, untouched, neither happy nor unhappy, a spectator, but a royal spectator. Into this eternal Self was gathered the fruit and essence of each and every experience the lower "I" passed through; the secret of living was to identify oneself with this exalted and untroubled royalty. . . .

The rolling-stone went rolling, therefore, somewhat in this spirit, which helped and comforted, which made most things possible, bearable at any rate, because it was the outcome of that strange inner conviction established in my blood, a conviction, as mentioned, neither argument nor evidence could alter.

Letters from home, home memories as well, pertained now to some distant, unrecoverable region that was dead and gone. My mother's letters—one every week without a single omission—expressed a larger spirit. Her faithful

letters, secure in a sincere belief, were very precious, I remember. Sometimes, though never successfully, they tempted me almost to giving my full confidence and telling more than my camouflaged reports revealed. From the rest of my family, with the exception of a really loved brother, I knew myself entirely divorced, a divorce that later years proved final and somehow inevitable.

To my father, who was always something of a stranger to me, I could never tell my heart; my mother, on the other hand, always had my confidence, coupled with an austere respect. Few words passed between us, yet she always knew, I felt, my thoughts. And this full confidence dated, oddly enough, from an incident in early childhood, when I was saying the Lord's Prayer at her knee. There was a phrase that puzzled me even when I was in knickerbockers: "Lead us not into temptation. . . ." I stopped, looked up into her face, and asked: "But *would* He lead me into temptation unless I asked Him not to?" Her eyes opened, she gazed down into mine with a thoughtful, if perplexed expression, for a moment she was evidently at a loss how to answer. She hesitated, then decided to trust me with the truth: "I have never quite understood those words myself," she said. "I think, though, it is best to leave their explanation to Him, and to say the words exactly as He taught them."

"Old souls" and "young souls" was a classification that ruled my mind in this New York period: my mother was of the former, my father of the latter. In the Old lay innate the fruits, the results, the memories of many many previous lives, and this ripeness of long experience showed itself in certain ways—in taste, in judgment, in their standard of values, in that mysterious quality called tact; above all, perhaps, in the type and quality of goods they desired from life. Worldly ambitions, so-called, were generally negligible in them. What we label to-day as the subconscious was invariably fully charged; also, without too much difficulty, accessible. It made them interesting,

stimulating and not easily exhausted. Wide sympathies, spread charity, understanding were their hall-marks, and a certain wisdom, as apart from intellect, their invariable gift; with, moreover, a tendency to wit, if not that rare quality wit itself, and humour, the power of seeing, and therefore laughing at, oneself. The cheaper experiences of birth, success, possessions they had learned long ago; it was the more difficult, but higher, values they had come back to master, and among the humbler ranks of life they found the necessary conditions. Christ, I reflected, was the son of a carpenter.

The Young Souls, on the other hand, were invariably hot-foot after the things of this world. Show, Riches and Power stuck like red labels on their foreheads. The Napoleons of the earth were among the youngest of all; the intellectuals, those who relied on reason alone, often the prosperous, usually the well-born, were of the same category. Rarely was "understanding" in them, and brilliant cleverness could never rank with that wisdom which knows that *tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner.* To me the Young Souls were the commonplace and uninteresting ones. They were shallow, sketchy, soon exhausted, the *Dutzend-menschen;* whereas, the others were intuitive, mature in outlook, aware of deeper values and eager for the things of the spirit. . . .

Thinking over my distinguished relations, I found none fit to black the boots of that kindly waiter in Krisch's cheap eating-house, Otto, the Black Forest German, who trusted us for food and often forwent his trumpery tip with a cheery smile. And there were many others, whose memory remains bright and wonderful from those dismal New York years. . . A volume of "Distinguished People I have Met," for instance, would include the Italian bootblack at the corner of 4th Avenue and 20th Street, who had the sun in his face, in his bright black eyes and brown skin, and who trusted me sometimes for a month, although five cents meant as much to him as it did to me. The bigwigs I interviewed for newspapers are forgotten, but the faces of Otto and the Italian shine in memory still.

I even remember the sentence the latter taught me. It invariably formed our daily greeting: *E molto tempo che siete stato amalato?* Often since have I spouted it in Italy, as bewildered by the voluble replies I could not understand, as the peasants were by my familiar enquiry after their health. Mrs. Bernstein, I think, would be entitled to a place, and Grant, who pawned his overcoat to buy me food, most certainly to full mention.

CHAPTER XXIX

WORTHY of more detailed description, however, is the figure of an old, old man I met about this time, a dignified, venerable and mysterious being, man of the world, lawyer, musician, scholar, poet, but above all, exile. Incidentally, he was madman too. What unkindly tricks fate had played with his fine brain, I never learned with accuracy. It was but the ruin of a great mind I knew. Pain and suffering of no unusual order, as I soon discovered, had, at any rate, left his heart as wise and sweet and gentle as any I have ever known. His voice, his eyes, his smile, his very gestures, even, had in them all the misery and all the goodness of the world. Our chance meeting deepened into a friendship, the intimacy of which between Padre and Figlio—names he himself assigned respectively—yet never permitted a full account of his own mysterious past. The little I gathered of his personal history before he died some dozen years later in England, came to me from patchwork sources, but none of it from his own lips. What term the alienists might use to describe the mental disorder of Alfred H. Louis I do not know.

The first time I saw him he cut a sorry figure; an old fellow in far worse plight and even worse down at heel than I was myself. It was in an olive-oil warehouse, at No. 1, Water Street, on the river front. McKay, the owner, whom I had met through some newspaper story or other, had converted me to the wisdom of an occasional glass of olive oil. It was healthful and delicious, but to me its chief value was as food. On this day of broiling heat I had wandered in for a glass of oil, and, while waiting a moment for the owner to appear, I noticed an old tramp seated on a packing-case, gazing at me in penetrating fashion. He was a Jew, he was very small, his feet were

tiny, his hands, I took in, were beautiful. I thought of Moses, of Abraham, some Biblical prophet come to life, of some storied being like the Wandering Jew.

His atmosphere, that is, at once sent a message of something unusual to my imagination. But it was when McKay came in and, to my surprise, calmly introduced us as fellow Englishmen, that my mind was really startled—not because the old tramp was English, but because when he rose to shake my hand, it seemed to me that some great figure of history rose to address, not me, but the nations of the world. He reached barely to my shoulder, his face upturned to mine, yet the feeling came that it was I who looked up into his eyes. The dignity and power the frail outline conveyed were astonishing. He was a Presence. And his voice the same instant—though in some commonplace about having known Lord Dufferin—increased the air of greatness, almost I had said of majesty, that he wore so naturally. It was not merely cultured, deep and musical, it vibrated with a peculiar resonance that conveyed authority beyond anything I have known in any other human voice.

We talked . . . *he* talked, rather . . . hunger, thirst, the afflicting moist heat of the day were all forgotten, New York City was forgotten too. His words carried me beyond this world, his language in that astonishing voice wore wings that brought escape. His long frock-coat, green with age and dirt; his broken boots and frayed trousers; his shapeless top hat, brushed the wrong way till it looked like a beehive coated with rough plush; his grimy collar without a tie; the spots upon his grease-stained waistcoat—all vanished completely. It was, above all, I think, the poetry in his voice and words that brought the balm and healing into my whole being. The way his hands moved too. We talked for several hours, for it was McKay's nasal interruption, saying he must close the warehouse, that brought me back to—Water Street.

Recklessly, though with a diffidence as though I were with royalty, I invited him to dine, but in the cheap

Childs' Eating House where we "fed." I soon perceived that I had no reason to feel embarrassed. A cup of coffee and "sinkers" sufficed him, he took my shyness away, he won my easy and full confidence; and afterwards—for he refused to let me go—as we sat, that stilling night, on a bench in Battery Park, tramps and Wearie Willies our neighbours, but the salt air from the sea in our nostrils, he used a phrase that, giving me the calibre of his thought, was too significant ever to be forgotten. I had spoken of my hatred of the city and of my present circumstances in it. He peered into my face a moment beneath his dreadful hat, then, raising a beautiful hand by way of emphasis, his deep voice came to me like some music of the sea itself:

"No man worth his spiritual salt," he said with impressive gentleness, "is ever entangled in locality." He smiled, and the tenderness of the voice was in the eyes as well. . . .

The little park emptied gradually, the heated paving-stones lost something of their furnace breath, the stars were visible overhead beyond the great arc lights, the parched leaves rustled faintly, and I spoke to him of poetry. He had lived with Longfellow, he had known Browning. The poetry of the world was in his soul—Greek, Latin, German, French, above all, Hebrew. I drank in his words, unaware of the passing hours. To me it was like finding a well in the desert when I was dying of thirst. Even the awful city he transfigured. Suddenly his lean fingers touched my arm, his voice deepened and grew soft, he took his hat off. "I will say my Night-Song to you now," he said. "I can only say it to very, very few. For years I have said it to—no one. But *you* shall hear it."

If there was something in his voice and manner that thrilled me to the core, the poem he then repeated on that bench in Battery Park at midnight gave me indescribable sensations of beauty and delight. I realized I listened to a personal confession that was a revelation of the mysterious old heart beneath the green

frock-coat. It seemed to me that Night herself spoke through him:

Known only, only to God and the night, and the stars and me!
Prophetic, jubilant Song,
Smiting the rock-bound hours till the waters of life flow free;
And a Soul, on pinion strong,
Flieth afar, and hovers over the infinite sea
Of love and of melody:
While the blind fates weave their nets
And the world in sleep forgets.

Known only, only to me and the night, and the stars and God!
Song, from a burning breast,
Of a land of perfected delights which the foot of man ne'er trod,
Like a foaming wine expressed
From passionate fruits that glowed 'mid the boughs of the Eden lost,
Ere sin was born and frost;—
Song wild with desires and regrets,
While the world in sleep forgets.

Known only, only to me and God, and the night and the stars!
The beacon fire of song,
Flaming for guidance and hope while the storm-winds wage their wars;
Balm for the ancient wrong,
Dropping from healing wings on the wounds of the heart and brain,
Quenching their ancient pain:
Love-star that rises and sets,
While the world in sleep forgets.

Known only, only to God and me, and the stars and the night!
Dove that returns to my ark,
Murmuring of grief-floods falling, of light beyond all light:
Voice that cleaveth the dark,
Singing of earth growing heaven, of distant lands that bless,
Though they may not caress,
And, blessing, pay Love's old debts,
While the world in sleep forgets.

Long before he ended the tears were coursing slowly down his withered cheeks, and when the last word died away a long silence came between us, for I could find no words to express the emotion in me. He took my hand

and held it a moment tightly, then presently got up, put on his old hat again, with the remark that it was time for bed, and followed me slowly to a Broadway cable car. His small, frail figure seemed to have dwindled to a child's shadow as he moved beside me; he had a way of hunching his thin shoulders that still further dwarfed his height; I felt myself a giant physically, but in my mind *his* stature reached the stars. We exchanged addresses. He lived in 8th Street, a miserable attic, I learned later, though I never actually entered it. Of his mental disorder no inkling had then reached me. I watched him melt into the shadows of the side street with the feeling that I watched some legendary figure, some ancient prophet, some mysterious priest. He smiled at me; there was love and blessing in the brilliant eyes. Then he was gone. . . . For me, at this time, to meet and talk with such a man held something of the fabulous. He had set fire to a hundred new thoughts and left them flaming in me.

It was in this way began a friendship that has always seemed to me marvellous, and that lasted till his death in England some fifteen years later. Sweet, patient, resigned and lovable to the end, he died incurably insane, the charity in him never tainted, the tenderness unstained, the passionate love of his kind, of beauty, of all that is lovely and of good report, unspoilt. The grimmest pain had not soured the natural sweetness in him, his gentle spirit knew no bitterness, his megalomania, complicated, I believe, with other varieties of disorder, was harmless and inoffensive. As Padre he still lives in my memory; as The Old Man of Visions ("The Listener"), he still haunts my imagination. "You have taken my name away," he chided me with a smile, when I published this picture of him. "I am now uncertain who I am. That is well. I am Anybody I choose to be. I will be Everybody." He had rooms in Great Russell Street at the time. Though baptised by Charles Kingsley into the English Church, he later became a Roman Catholic, but, when the end came, he reverted to the blood and faith born in him. He was buried, by his own wish, in a Hebrew cemetery. The

epitaph he so often told me with an ironic smile he had chosen for his own was not, however, used. Talk, he always declared, vain, excessive talk, lay at the bottom of every misunderstanding in the world. If people would talk less, there would be less trouble in life. "Sorry I spoke," was to be cut upon one of his tombstones; "Sorry they spoke" upon the other.

A poem he wrote—published, like the Night Song, in *Harper's Magazine*—describing death, I have kept all these years. The strange intensity of expression he put into the passage which begins: "The sand of my Being is fused and runs . . ." lives in my mind to this day. The title of the poem was "The Final Word":

Hence then at last! For the strife is past
  Of the Birth and Death, of the Self and Soul:
The memory breaks, the breath forsakes,
  The waves of the æther o'er me roll.
The pulses cease, and the Hours release
  Their wearied school of the nerves and brain:
I fall on the Deep of the Mystic Sleep,
  Where the Word that is Life can be heard again.
And the fires descend, and my fragments blend,
  And the sand of my Being is fused and runs
To the mould of a glass for the rays to pass
  Of the Sun of the centre that rules all suns.
But, or ever I rest, I take from my breast
  My blood-drained heart for the tablet white
Of a gospel page to the far-off Age—
  O Hand eternal!—Come forth—and write!

CHAPTER XXX

THE personality of Alfred H. Louis is identified with New York for me: he accompanied my remaining years there, guide, philosopher and friend. He took in hand that indiscriminate heterogeneous reading which the Free Library made possible. He proved an unfailing and inspiring counsellor. How, why or whence he came to be in America at all I never knew. One thing that stirred him into vehemence, when the past was mentioned, was the name of Gladstone. With flashing eyes and voice of thunder he condemned the Grand Old Man, both as to character and policy, in unmeasured terms. Gladstone, apparently, had done him a personal injury as well. "We cannot let that man come among us," was Gladstone's dictum, when Louis's name was being considered as a candidate for Parliament by the Party. "He is too earnest." This fragment was all he ever told me, but there lay evidently much behind it. "*Too earnest!*" he repeated with contemptuous indignation.

Of his days at Cambridge he was more communicative, though, unfortunately, I kept no notes. The eloquence and earnestness of his speeches at the Union, when Sir William Harcourt was president, made, according to his own account, a great stir. Of Dr. (Bishop) Lightfoot, of Benson, afterwards Archbishop, he had intimate memories, coloured by warm praise. His book on "England's Foreign Policy" (Bentley, 1869) apparently angered Gladstone extremely, and Louis's political career was killed.

He was called to the bar. Of success, of important cases, he told me nothing. His early brilliance suffered, I gathered, a strange eclipse, and from things he hinted at, I surmised—I cannot state it definitely—that a period in some kind of *maison de santé* followed about this time. That he had been, then or later, in an asylum for the

insane, I heard vouched for repeatedly in London years later. For an interval before the breakdown came, he was editor, or part-editor, of the *Spectator*, and in some similar connexion, as owner or editor, he served the *Fortnightly* too. George Eliot he knew well, giving me vivid descriptions of her famous Sundays, and of his talks with George Henry Lewes and Herbert Spencer. He claimed to be the original of Daniel Deronda. He was a pupil of Sterndale Bennett's on the piano. Of his friendship with Cardinal Manning he had also much to tell.

It was in the domain of politics that I first began to notice the exaggeration and incoherence of his mind, and it was "in politics," evidently, that the deep wounds which would not heal had been received. In music, poetry, literature, above all in law, his intelligence had remained clear and sound, his judgments consummate, his knowledge encyclopædic. Large tracts of memory in him were, apparently, obliterated, whole stretches of life submerged, but his legal attainments had remained untouched. A business friend of mine "briefed" him to lecture on International, Company and Patent Law; and the substance of those "Lectures" stood the test, years later, of the highest English and French Courts.

The lonely old man's kingdom was his mind, and he dwelt in it aloof, secure, contented, unassailable. Into the big empty stretches a half education had left in my own, he poured his riches with unstinted satisfaction, even with delight. Worldly advice he never proffered; the world had left him aside, he, in his turn, left the world aside. To practical questions he merely shook his Moses-head: "That," he would say, "you must decide for yourself. Considered in relation to the Eternities, it is of little moment in any case." To any question, however, of a philosophical kind, to any enquiry for explanation about what perplexed or interested me in the realm of thought, he would reply with what I can only call a lecture, but a lecture so lucid, so packed with knowledge and learning, with classical comment and quotation, often with passages of moving eloquence, and invariably in language

so considered that no single word could have been altered, and the "essay" might have been published as it stood—lectures, in a word, that enthralled and held me spellbound for hours at a time. For his knowledge was not knowledge merely, it was knowledge transmuted by emotion into that spiritual wisdom called Understanding.

The respect he inspired me with was such that rarely did I venture upon a personal question, though I longed to know more about himself and his mysterious story. His face sometimes betrayed intense mental suffering. On one occasion, feeling braver, owing to a happy mood that seemed established naturally between us, I attempted rather an intimate question of some kind about his past. He turned and stared with an expression that startled me. It was so keen, so searching. For several minutes he made no reply. His eyes narrowed. I felt ashamed. I had wounded him. The truth was, it seems, I had touched his heart.

"Listen," he said presently. In a voice full of tears and deep emotion, a very quiet, a very beautiful voice, he replied to my question. The expression of his eyes turned inwards, there rose in memory the ghostly figure of someone he had loved, perhaps loved still. The whole aspect of the old exiled poet became charged with an intolerable sadness, as he spoke the lines, not to myself, but to this vanished figure—"Shadowed by yearning memory's raven wing":

HEREAFTER

Thou know'st not, sweet, what must remain unknown
Through all that my poor words can say or sing,
The measure of the love to thee I bring.
One day thou wilt, when, by a graven stone
That bears a name, thou standest, white, alone,
Shadowed by yearning memory's raven wing,
Rained on by blossoms of some wind-torn spring
Wherefrom thirst-quenching fruit shall ne'er be grown.
Then - power shall rest upon the vanished hand
Once too much trembling to thy touch for power;
Then—shall my soul at last thy soul command
As it might not in Time's brief fitful hour;
And what Life's fires might neither melt nor burn
Shall yield with tears to ashes and the urn.

I had my answer. Never again did I venture on a personal question.

All our talks came round to poetry in the end. It was his deepest love as well. Sound lawyer he may have been, but inspired poet, to me at least, he certainly was. His own poems he severely deprecated, calling them, with the exception of the "Night Song," "poor things, though from my heart." His room, it seems, was littered with them in manuscript, which he rarely tried, and never wished, to sell. Some time later Mr. Alden, Editor of *Harper's Magazine*, questioned me for information "about a wonderful old gentleman who comes into the office like an emperor, and offers me a poem as though he were parting painfully with a treasure he hardly dared let out of his keeping, and certainly does not wish to sell for cash." To all, thus, he was a mystery. If he was uncared for, he was at the same time indifferent to human care. Great intellect, great mind, great heart, he seemed to me, a wraith perhaps, but an august, a giant wraith, draped by mysterious shadows, dwelling in a miserable slum, cut off from his kind amid the dim pomp and pageantry of majestic memories.

It was thus, at any rate, with the pardonable exaggeration of ignorant twenty-five, I saw and knew the Old Man of Visions. It was his deep heart of poetry, rather than his fine intellect I worshipped. The under-mind in him, the subconscious region, I think, was whole and healed; it was the upper-mind, the surface consciousness, that alone was damaged. If this mind was wrecked, this brain partly in ruins, the soul in him peered forth above the broken towers, remaining splendidly aware. Not even the imperfect instrument through which it worked could prevent this fine expression: behind the disproportion of various delusions, behind the outer tumbled ruins, there dwelt unaffected in him that greater thing than any intellect—Understanding.

CHAPTER XXXI

IT was with a singular young man, who claimed proudly to be the illegitimate son of a certain duke, that I found myself presently in the eau de Cologne business. A long difficult winter had passed; all my friends had disappeared; there had been periods of dried apples again, of posing in studios, of various odd jobs, and of half-starving, with black weeks in plenty. I had moved into yet cheaper quarters, where I occupied a room that had been formerly a butler's pantry, and was so small that when the folding-bed was down the entire space from wall to wall was occupied. The wash-hand stand was a sink in a recess let into the wall and supplied with a tap.

When Mr. Louis visited me, as he did frequently, we lowered the bed and used it as a divan. The door could not open then. I made tea in the sink. We talked. . . .

If Louis's atmosphere suggested choirs and places where they sing, that of Brodie, as I may call him here, was associated with bars and places where they drink. Not that he drank himself, for he was most abstemious, but that in certain superior saloons, all of them far above my means, he was usually to be found. A simple, yet complex, generous as well as mean creature, with all the canniness of the Scot, with his uncanniness as well, his education had been neglected, he read with difficulty, and only wrote well enough to sign his name laboriously to a cheque. He, too, like Louis, had his mystery; there was no one, indeed, in my circle of those days whose antecedents would bear too close a scrutiny.

I was first introduced to him by a burly Swede, with hands like beef-steaks, and the shoulders of a heavy-weight fighter, who was later arrested and sent to gaol for picking pockets. His notoriety as a sneak-thief none of us had guessed, and how those bulky hands could have accom-

plished anything neat and clever was a puzzle. In the Scotsman's pleasant quarters, somewhat outlandishly furnished by himself on a top floor, the Swede had made himself at home too long. Brodie, the prey of many who, invited for a day or two, stayed on for weeks, was glad to see his back. His weak good-nature, refusing to turn his guests out, was the cause of endless troubles with men who sponged upon his kindness and his purse. This and his eau de Cologne business, "me beezness" as he called it, were his sole topics of conversation. He had money to spend—was it an allowance? We never knew—and was always well dressed; many a square meal he stood me; there was something in his soft West of Scotland voice that drew me to this odd fish in the "perfumery line." It reminded me of happier days. And I have described his habits at some length, because it was owing to a small service I rendered him, and rendered myself at the same time, that I became a partner in "me beezness" of manufacturing and selling eau de Cologne made from the Johann Maria Farina receipe.

Brodie's social aspirations were very marked; to hear him talk one would have thought him heir to a dukedom; he had, too, a curious faculty for getting his name associated with people above him in the social world. How he managed it was a problem I never solved. His instinct for smelling out and using such folk was a gift from heaven. To see his name in the paper gave him supreme happiness. Real "Society" of course, Ward Macallister's Four Hundred, lay beyond the reach of what was actually a peasant type, but there were less select fields he worked assiduously with great success. There was matter for a play, a novel, a character study, at any rate, in Brodie, who himself, I learned much later, had come out to New York as valet to Clyde Fitch, the playwright, and whose receipe for the "genuine Johann Maria Farina," his successful "beezness," was stolen property. My father's son knew certainly queer bedfellows in that underworld in New York City.

Meeting him in one of his usual haunts one night, he

complained bitterly of a young man he had invited for a week, but who had stayed a month, and stayed on still. The name, which need not be mentioned, was a well-known one. It was a bad case of imposition, by a man, too, who had ample means of his own. I offered to turn him out, much to Brodie's alarm. That is, he both desired the result and feared it. Next morning I arrived in the oddly-furnished rooms and found Brodie cooking breakfast for the undesirable young man who had imposed on his host too long, and who still lay in bed. It was a comic scene, no doubt, for Brodie, though frightened, bore out my accusations while he fried the eggs, and the other blustered noisily until he found out that bluster was of no avail; and then, threatening an action for assault, got suddenly out of bed and dressed himself. Half-an-hour later he was, bag and baggage, in the street, while I went down and sold the "story" to the *New York Journal*, who printed it next morning with big headlines, but also with a drawing showing the eviction scene. No action for assault followed, however; I received twenty dollars for my "story"; and Brodie, full of gratitude—his name was mentioned in flattering terms—offered to take me into partnership in "me beezness." I demurred at first. "You might help me with the correspondence," he suggested cautiously. I was to be his educated partner and his pen.

All that spring and summer I received ten dollars a week which, in addition to free-lance newspaper work, enabled me to live in comparative luxury. In a dark little back-office on Broadway and 8th Street, the eau de Cologne was made. It might have been the secret headquarters of an anarchist fraternity, or the laboratory of some mediæval alchemist, such was the atmosphere of secrecy, of caution and of mystery. It never occurred to me that anything was wrong. Our only assistant was a young Polish girl named Paola, a beautiful, dark-haired Jewess. The precious recipe I was never allowed to see. Great flagons in wicker coverings stood in rows upon long shelves; the mixing of the ingredients was a delicate

operation lasting an hour ; the room smelt rich and sweet of spices that made me think of Araby and the East. It was a curious and picturesque scene—the rather darkened room, the perfume-laden air, the hush no traffic could disturb, the great, mysterious flagons, which might almost have concealed forty thieves, the canny Scot of doubtful origin, the beautiful Jewess, the air of caution and suspicion that reigned over all. The filling of the bottles in two sizes, affixing the labels, flavouring the soap —we made eau-de-Cologne soap too—answering the letters, writing flowery advertisements, and so forth, occupied the entire day. Brodie, a born salesman, would take a cab and visit the big stores with samples—Macy's, Siegel and Cooper, and others whose names I have forgotten. He never came back without an order. The business flourished.

I made no secret of being in the perfumery trade. I had moved into a larger room at my boarding-house. I had bought boots, some new linen, and most of my things were out of pawn. Then, presently, here and there, I began to notice things I did not like. Rumours reached me. Hints were dropped, sometimes more than hints, that made me wonder and look over my shoulder a little. No member of my immediate circle at this time was of too sweet origin nor of too stainless habits, yet from these came the rumours and the hints. I had better "keep my eyes peeled," and the rest. . . . ! One man in particular who warned me was an elderly, shrewd German, friend of Brodie's, and himself a mystery. His occupation was unknown, however, even to Brodie ; he hid it carefully away ; he led a double life, protecting himself with the utmost skill and caution behind a screen of detail none of us ever pierced. "Von" Schmidt, as he styled himself, was educated ; also he had a heart ; for once, when I was in a state of collapse from hunger, he brought oysters for me at great trouble to himself, having to go out on a rainy night and bring them some distance along the street : from which moment, though the unpleasant mystery about him intrigued and cautioned me,

I became his friend. We talked German together. His one desire, he confided to me, was to marry a rich woman, and once he clumsily proposed to arrange a rich marriage for myself if I would give him a—commission on results!

His personality is worth this brief description, perhaps, since it sheds light, incidentally, upon the world I lived in. Always most carefully dressed, he occupied a single room in a well-appointed house in East 22nd Street, talking airily of a bedroom on the floor above, of a bathroom I was sure he never used, and complaining apologetically of "this awful house I'm in for the moment." His pose was that of an aristocrat, proud and resigned among untoward circumstances, and it was through no mistake of his own that this humbug did not impose on me. I just knew t was all bunkum. His actual business, I felt sure, was unsavoury, though Brodie, having once discovered artificial flowers in his coat pocket, thought he was a floor-walker in some big store. Various suspicious details confirmed me later in the belief that his real occupation was blackmailing.

In his single room, at any rate, where a piece of furniture against the wall covered with framed photographs of German notabilities was in reality a folding-bed—I never once, since the oysters, betrayed that I knew this—he lived "like a gentleman." Every night, from nine o'clock onwards, he was "at home"; a box of cigars, various liqueurs, he offered without fail, and "with an air" if you please, although the former never held more than three or four cigars, the bottles never more than enough to fill two glasses, because "my servant, confound him, has forgotten again to fill them." He had no servant, of course, and the minimum of replenishing was done by himself every evening before nine o'clock. "Then you are a Baron really?" I said once, referring to the "von" before his name. He looked at me with the disdainful smile a prince in difficulties might have worn: "In this city of snobs and scoundrels," he said lightly, "I have dropped my title. The 'von' alone I find more dignified."

He left the house, I found, every morning sharp at eight, and this was in favour of Brodie's theory that he had some regular job. He was an experienced, much-lived old bird, a touch of something sinister about him always, about most of his friends as well. Some very disagreeable types I surprised more than once in his well-furnished room. He "knew the ropes," knew men and women too, his counsel was always sound in worldly matters. A lack of humour was his chief failing, it seemed to me, while his snobbery was another weakness that probably led many of his schemes to failure. Every summer, for instance, he would go for two weeks to Newport, where the rank and fashion went. "When I was at Newport," or "I am going to Newport next week," were phrases his tongue loved to mouth and taste like fine wine. But his brief days there were spent actually in a cheap boarding-house, although the letters he wrote to all and sundry, to myself included, bore one word only as address: "Newport," made from a die, at the head of his coloured paper.

It was von Schmidt, then, who warned me about Brodie and his eau-de-Cologne business: "He is a fool, a peasant. There will be trouble there. Do not identify yourself with him or his business. It is not worth while. . . ." And his manner conveyed that he could tell something more definite if he liked, which I verily believe was the case. Brodie, I was convinced later, paid him tribute.

I began to feel uncomfortable. One day I asked Brodie, point blank, what his recipe was and how he came by it? "That's me own beezness," he replied. "There's nothing to be nairvous about." I consulted "old Louis." "If you feel the faintest doubt," was his answer, "you should leave at once." I decided to get out. Brodie asked me to wait the current month. I agreed.

Before the end of the month, however, when I left the eau-de-Cologne business, a most unpleasant and alarming incident occurred. The terrible thing, long dreaded in a vague kind of way, had overtaken me at last. I was to

be convicted of a crime I had not committed. I might even be sent to gaol. . . .

Brodie's outlandish furnishing of his rooms has been mentioned purposely; they were filled with an assortment of showy trash that could not have deceived a charwoman; fifty dollars would have covered everything. He was proud of his curtains, rugs and faked draperies, however; showed them off with the air of a connoisseur; hinted at their great value. He had insured them, it always pleased him to mention. The *New York Journal*, describing the eviction scene, had referred to his fine apartment "furnished with exotic taste and regardless of cost," adding this touch of colour which was certainly not my own. Brodie, thus encouraged in print, promptly took out another fire policy in a second company. And one day, while toying with his flagons, he mentioned casually that he was having "the place done up a bit," new paint, new paper were to be put on, and—might he bring his clothes to my room until this was finished, as his own cupboard space was limited?

He brought the suits himself, carrying them one by one concealed inside a folded overcoat upon his arm. He did this always after dusk. No suspicion stirred in me. My own cupboards were, of course, empty. Brodie's fine wardrobe now filled them. It all seemed natural enough; certainly it roused no doubt or query in me; neither did the party to which I was invited a few days later, which included a "distinguished" member, of course, a famous dress-designer from Europe, with whose publicity campaign in the Press, Brodie had contrived to get his name associated.

We were a party of five men, and we met at our host's rooms before going out to dine, the rooms that had just been done up; and attention, I recall, was drawn particularly to the beauty, rarity and value of his variegated trash. The electric light was shaded, a big coal fire burned in the grate, at a cursory glance the apartment might possibly have produced a favourable impression of expense and richness. But our host did not allow us to

linger; there was a hurried cocktail, and we were gone. I remember that I was last but one in the procession down the stairs from this top floor; Brodie, who had held the door open for us to pass, came last. Also I remembered later, that as we reached the next flight, he said he had forgotten something, and dashed upstairs again to fetch it. A moment later he rejoined us in the street, and we all went on to dinner. "It was a 'kind of house-warming party," he explained.

The evening passed pleasantly. We went on to Koster and Biel's music hall, and after that, to supper in some Tenderloin joint or other. And it was here I first noticed a change in our host. Something about him was different. His behaviour was not what was normal to him. His face was pale, his manner nervous and excited; though there was no drink in him to account for it, he was overwrought, unusually voluble, unable to keep still for a single moment. I had never seen him like this before, and the strangeness of his behaviour arrested me. Once or twice, *à propos* of nothing, he referred to the money he had spent on his apartment; and more than once in asides to me, he spoke of the value of his rugs and curtains, engaging my endorsement, as it were. The other men, who knew him less intimately, probably noticed nothing, or, if they did, attributed it to the excitement of alcohol. . . . But it made me more and more uneasy. I didn't like it; I watched him attentively. I came to the strange conclusion, long before the evening was over, that he was frightened. And when he met suggestions that it was time for bed with obstinate refusals, anxious and nervous at the same time, I knew that he was more than frightened, he was terrified.

Once when I asked him whether he felt unwell, there was startled terror in his cunning eyes as he whispered: "I dreamed of rats last night. Something bad will be coming." His face was white as chalk. To dream of rats, with him, always meant an enemy in the offing; a dozen times he had given me instances of this strange superstition; to dream of an acquaintance in connexion with these

unpleasant rodents meant that this particular acquaintance was false, an enemy, someone who meant him harm. I, therefore, understood the allusion in his mind, but this time, for some reason, I did not believe it. He was lying. The terror of a guilty conscience was in those startled eyes and in that sheet-white skin. I felt still more uneasy. I was glad I had put my resignation from the "beezness" in writing. There was trouble coming in connexion with that recipe, and Brodie already knew it.

It was after two in the morning when we reached home. My rooms were a couple of streets before his own, but he begged me to see him to his door. His nervous state had grown, meanwhile, worse and worse; his legs failed him several times, seeming to sink under his weight; he took my arm; more than once he reeled. There was something about it all, about himself particularly, that made my skin crawl. The awful feeling that I, too, was to be involved increased in me.

As we turned out of Fourth Avenue into his street, a loud noise met us: a prolonged, hoarse sound, a clank of machinery in it somewhere, another sound as well that pulsed and throbbed. A dense crowd blocked the way. There was smoke. A fire engine was pumping water into a burning building—the one that Brodie lived in. These details I noticed in the first few seconds, but even before I had registered them Brodie uttered a queer cry and half-collapsed against me. He was speechless with terror, and at first something of his terror he communicated to me, too. My heart sank into my boots. The "rats" I understood instantly, had nothing to do with his eau de Cologne recipe. This was a far more serious matter.

Fires were no new thing to me, and this evidently was only a small one, but, none the less, people might have been burned to death. Telling my companion to wait for me, and to keep his mouth shut whatever happened, I produced some paper and pushed my way through the crowd to the police cordon, saying I was from the *Evening Sun*. Though I had no fire-badge, the bluff worked. I ran up the steps of the familiar house. "Which

floor is it? How did it start? Is it insured? Is anybody burned?" I asked a fireman. The answer came and I jotted it down; it was the top floor, how it started was unknown, nobody was hurt—it was heavily insured.

It had been burning for four hours, the worst was over, the fire was out; only steam and smoke now filled the staircase and corridors. The street was covered with a litter of ruined furniture. The occupants of the lower floors stood about in various attire; I caught unpleasant remarks as I dashed upstairs to Brodie's floor. Hoses, I found, were still at work; the room we had left six hours before was gutted; a gaping hole permitted a view of the room on the floor below, and this hole began immediately in front of the grate. A black woolly mat with long hair, I remembered, had lain on the floor just there. The unpleasant remarks, as I ran up, had reference to insurance; phrases such as "over-insured," "too well insured" were audible. They were the usual phrases uttered at the scene of a New York fire, where arson was as common as picking pockets; I had heard them a hundred times; they had furnished clues for my newspaper stories. On this occasion they held a new significance.

Brodie shared my folding-bed that night, but he did not sleep. He cried a good deal. He said very little. He referred neither to the loss of his stuff, nor to the fact of its being covered by insurance, nor to how and why the fire started. He was frightened to the bone.

Next day, when we visited the burned apartment to secure what fire and water had spared, Brodie was abused and scarified by the inmates as he went upstairs. . . . Weeks of keen anxiety followed, of worse than anxiety. The insurance companies refused to pay the claims, which Brodie, after much hesitation, had sent in. They decided to fight them. The lawyer—a *scheister*, meaning a low, unprincipled type of attorney who would take any case for the money it might contain—bled my friend effectively by preying on his obvious fear. He was summoned to give witness before a hearing in the offices

of the company, and I shall never forget his face when he met me that night with the significant words: "They know everything about me, everything about you too. They even know that I took all my clothes to your room before it happened. They are going to summon you to give evidence too."

I consulted with "old Louis," telling him the full story, but making no accusations. "Few people are worthy to live with," was his comment, "fewer still to share one's confidence. You must tell the truth as you know it. You have nothing to fear." I was searchingly examined by the company's lawyer and my evidence made, I saw, a good impression. No awkward leading questions were put. Brodie had been kind to me; I knew nothing definite against him; in his ignorance, which I described, he might well have thought his possessions were of value. It had nothing to do with me, at any rate, and there was a perfectly good explanation for his clothes being in my cupboard. None the less, it was a trying ordeal. Worse, however, was to follow. The fire marshal, recently appointed, a proverbial new broom, was out to put down the far too frequent arson in the city. Fire Marshal Mitchell—I see his face before me still—intended to prosecute.

This was a bombshell. My imaginative temperament then became, indeed, my curse. Waiting for the summons was like waiting for the verdict of a hostile jury. I waited many days, hope alternating with fear. I felt sure I was being watched the whole time. Brodie and I never met once. I changed my room about this time, though for reasons entirely disconnected with this unpleasant business (I had obtained a violin pupil in another house), and I wrote to the fire marshal informing him of my new address, in case, as I understood was probable, he might want my evidence.

But what really alarmed me most was my inside knowledge of New York justice. I had seen too many innocent men sent up; I had heard faked evidence in too many police cases; I knew that, without a "pull," I stood

but little chance of escaping a conviction as an accessory to what they would call a wanton case of arson. I was not even on the staff of a newspaper at the time. I had no influence of any sort behind me. Nor were my means of support too "visible," a Britisher, a highly-connected Britisher into the bargain, it was just what the new-broom fire marshal was looking for. It would make a big case for the Press. The agony of mind I endured was ghastly, and the slow delay of long waiting intensified it. . . . One evening, on coming home about dusk, I saw a strange man in the little hall-way of my house. He asked me my name. I told him. He handed me a blue paper and went out. It was the long-expected subpœna from the fire marshal. I was summoned to attend at eight o'clock two mornings later in his office.

My emotions that night and the next day were new experiences to me; I heard the judge sentence me, saw myself in prison for a term of years with hard labour. I began to *feel* guilty. I knew I should say the wrong thing to the fire marshal. I should convict myself. The truth was the truth, but everything pointed against me; I knew Brodie as a friend, I was his business associate, was frequently in his rooms, had accepted kindnesses from him, I needed money badly, I had hidden his good clothes in my cupboards a few days before the fire. I had been with him on that particular night, I had left the room with him—last of the party. I should be looked upon as guilty, it was for me to clear myself. Prejudice against me, too, as an Englishman would be strong. The Boyde episode would be revived, and twisted to show that I consorted with law-breakers. I should stammer and hesitate and appear to be hiding the truth, to be lying, and I should most certainly look guilty. The thing I dreaded had come upon me. I thought of my home and family.

It all made me realize with a fresh sharpness the kind of world poverty had dragged me down to, with the contrast between what I had been born to and what I now lived in. . . . I needed every scrap of strength and

comfort my books could give me. That I was exaggerating like a schoolboy never occurred to me. I suffered the tortures of the damned, of the already condemned, at any rate. That I was innocent of wrong-doing was, for some reason, no consolation: I had got myself into an awful mess and should have to pay the price.

The wildest ideas filled my brain; I would call and enlist the influence of McCloy, of various officials, of headquarters detectives, of D. L. Moody the Revivalist, who was then preaching in New York and who had been a guest in my father's house, of the Exchange Place banker, even of von Schmidt, though fear of blackmail stopped me here. But reflection told me how useless such a proceeding would be. The Republicans, besides, were in power at the time, and Tammany had no "pull." I even thought of Roosevelt, whom, as President of the Police Board, I had often interviewed. The fire marshal would rejoice in the case, of course, for, as with the Boyde story, the newspapers would print it at great length. There lay much *kudos* for him in it. I had no sleep that night, as I had no friend or counsellor either. I thought of spending it in Bronx Park with the trees, but it occurred to me that, if I were being watched, the act might be interpreted as an attempt to escape—for what would a New York fire marshal make of my love of nature?

The following day, as the dreaded examination grew closer, was a day of acute misery—until the late afternoon, when I met by chance the man who saved me. I shall always believe, at least, that "saved" is the right word to use.

A coincidence, as singular as the coincidence of catching Boyde, was involved. Fate, anyhow, brought me across the path of Mullins, the one man who could help, just at the time and place, too, where that help could be most effectively given. The word coincidence, therefore, seems justified.

Mullins, the Irishman, was an editorial writer on the *Evening Sun* when I was a reporter there; he disliked the paper as heartily as I did, and his ambition was to

join the staff of the *New York Times*, where Muldoon, another Irishman, a boon companion, was City Editor. He had proved a real friend to me in my days of gross inexperience. "If ever I get on the *Times*," he used to say, "I'll try and get a place for you, too. It's a fine, clean paper, and they treat a man decently." He had realized his ambition just about the time I went into the eau-de-Cologne business, but had said there was no vacancy for me. There might be one later. He would let me know. For months, however, we had not met, and the matter had really left my mind. And it was now, when I was casting about in a state of semi-panic for someone who might help me, that I suddenly thought of Mullins. As a last hope, rather, I thought of him, for it seemed a very off-chance indeed.

For various reasons I did not act upon the idea, but Mullins was in my mind, so much, so persistently, so often, that I kept seeing him in passers-by. I mistook several strangers for Mullins, until close enough to see my mistake. Then, suddenly, in Union Square, towards evening, I did see him. I was sitting on a bench. He walked past me. He was on his way to an assignment. I told him the whole story, making no accusations, but omitting no vital detail. He listened attentively, his face very grave. He shared my own misgivings. "It's just the kind of case Mitchell's looking for," he said. "He wants to make a splash with it. But I think I can fix it for you. Guess what my assignment is at this moment?"

And then he told me. His job that evening was a special interview with Mitchell, a descriptive story of the newly-appointed fire marshal, his personality and character, his plans for suppressing arson, and it was to be a front-page article. Mullins could make him or mar him; he had a free hand in the matter; the *Times* was a Republican organ. It would mean a great deal to Mitchell. "He comes from my part of Ireland," said Mullins with a grin and a wink. And then he added that he had spoken to Muldoon about me only the day before, and that Muldoon had promised me a place on the paper the moment it was

possible—in a few weeks probably. "I shall just mention to Mitchell that you're going on the *Times*," was his significant parting word to me, as he hurried off to keep his appointment.

My examination next morning was robbed of much of its terror. The fire marshal was evidently not quite sure of himself, for, if manner, voice and questions were severe, I detected an attitude that suggested wavering. A shorthand writer behind me took down every word I uttered, and the searching examination about the clothes, my social and business relations with Brodie, my knowledge, if any, concerning the value of his rugs and curtains, especially concerning the night of the fire and the details of how we left the room, gave me moments of acute discomfort. Although Mitchell rarely once looked straight at me, I knew he was observing my every word and gesture, the slightest change in facial expression, too. He confined himself entirely to questions, allowing no hint of his own opinion to escape him, and yet, to my very strung-up attention, he betrayed the uncertainty already mentioned. I, of course, confined myself entirely to answers, brief, but without hesitation.

My instinct, right or wrong, was to protect Brodie, a man who had shown me real kindness. I remembered the meals, for one thing. In any case, it was not for me to express opinions, much less to bring an accusation. And, towards the end of a gruelling half-hour, I began to feel a shade more comfortable. When, with a slightly different manner, the fire marshal began to ask personal questions about my own career, I felt the day was almost won. I gave a quick outline of my recent history, though I never once mentioned the name of Mullins; let fall the detail, too, that I was an Irishman, and, a little later, seizing an opening with an audacity that surprised myself even while I said the words, I congratulated Mr. Mitchell upon his campaign to crush out the far too frequent arson in the city. "As a newspaper man," I gave this blessing, and the shot, I instantly saw, went home. If I could be of any use to him on the *Times*, if any suspicious case came

my way, I added that I should always be glad to serve him. For the first time the fire marshal smiled. I shot in a swift last stroke for Brodie, though an indirect one. "But you don't want any *mis*fires," I ventured, inwardly delighted that the play on the word amused him. "A big case that failed of a conviction would be damaging."

We shook hands as I left soon after, though the final comfort he denied me. For when I mentioned that my present address would always find me "if you need me again," he merely bowed and thanked me. He did *not* say, as I hoped he would, "your presence will not be required any more."

CHAPTER XXXII

SIX weeks later, when the torrid summer heat was waning and September breezes had begun to cool the streets, the nights, at any rate, I found myself a reporter on the staff of the *New York Times*. My salary of $35 a week seemed incredible. It was like coming into a fortune, and its first effect was to make a miser of me. I had learned the value of the single cent; I found myself fearful of spending even that cent. I understood why people who pass suddenly from want to affluence become stingy, complaining always of being hard-up. I determined to save. I opened an account in a Savings Bank against another rainy day. This trait, acquired in my unhappy New York period, remains in me still, I notice. Never have I known from that time to this what it means to be comfortably off, free from financial anxiety for more than a month or two ahead, yet each time an extra bit of money comes in, I am aware of the instinct to be extremely, unnecessarily careful of each penny. The less I have, the more reckless I feel about spending it, and *vice versa*.

Those six weeks, however, before Muldoon sent for me, proved the most painful and unhappy of all my New York days. There was something desperate about them; I reached bottom. It was the darkest period before the dawn, though I had no certainty that the dawn was breaking. My income from the eau de Cologne business was ended, my free-lance work struck a bad streak, the artists were still out of town, the studios consequently empty; my violin pupil had gone to Boston. It was during this August that I slept in Central Park, and passed the night—for there was not much sleep about it—beneath the Bronx Park trees as well, though I had to walk all the long weary way to get there. It was, also, *par excellence*, the height of the dried-apple season. With the

exception of Old Louis, occasionally Mullins too, I had no companionship. Brodie, who by the way received no money from the insurance companies, but equally, escaped a worse disaster, I never saw again. The post on the *Times*, meanwhile, seemed far away, highly problematical too. My comforts were Bronx Park, occasionally open-air music, Louis, and my own dreams, speculations and, chief of all, the Bhagavad Gita. . . . Hours I spent in the free libraries. Never, before or since, did I read so many books in so short a time. This free reading, of course, never stopped for a moment all the years I lived in New York, but during these six weeks it reached a maximum.

From the 'vantage ground of easier days I have often looked back and wondered why I made no real effort to better myself, to get out of the hated city, to go west, for a railway pass was always more or less within my power, and other fellows, similarly in difficulties, were always changing occupations and localities. It was due, I think, to a kind of resignation, though rather a fierce resignation, a kind of obstinate spirit of acceptance in me. "Take it all, whatever comes," said this spirit. "Dodge, shirk, avoid nothing. You have deserved it. Exhaust it then. Suck the orange dry." And, as if life were not severe and difficult enough, as it was, I would even practise certain austerities I invented on my own account. Already I felt myself immeasurably old; life seemed nearly ended; external events, anyhow, did not *really* matter. . . .

A rolling-stone sees life, of course, but collects little, if any, fruit; though I made no determined efforts to escape my conditions at this time, a new adventure ever had attractions for me. Having once tasted the essence of a particular experience, I found myself weary of it and longing for a new one. This vagabondage in the blood has strengthened with the years. A fixed job means prison, a new one sends my spirits up. Routine is hell. To take a room, a flat, a job by the year, means insupportable detestation of any of them soon afterwards. It

is a view of life that hardly goes to make good citizenship, but, on the other hand, it tends to keep the heart young, to prevent too early hardening of the mental arteries, while it certainly militates against the dread disease of boredom. *Une vie mouvementée* has its vagabond values. To a certain side of my nature Old Louis's wiser epitaph ("Sorry *I* spoke; sorry *they* spoke") made less appeal than some anonymous verses I came across in *Scribner's Magazine* with the title "A Vagrant's Epitaph"—verses I knew by heart after a first reading:

Change was his mistress; Chance his counsellor.
  Love could not hold him; Duty forged no chain.
The wide seas and the mountains called him,
  And grey dawns saw his camp-fires in the rain.

Sweet hands might tremble!—aye, but he must go.
  Revel might hold him for a little space;
But, turning past the laughter and the lamps,
  His eyes must ever catch the luring Face.

Dear eyes might question! Yea, and melt again;
  Rare lips a-quiver, silently implore;
But he must ever turn his furtive head,
  And hear that other summons at the door.

Change was his mistress: Chance his counsellor.
  The dark firs knew his whistle up the trail.
Why tarries he to-day? . . . And yesternight
  Adventure lit her stars without avail.

The plague of possessions, at any rate, has never troubled me, either actually or in desire, while the instinct to reduce life to its simplest terms has strengthened. The homeless feeling of living in my trunks is happiness, the idea of domesticity appals, and the comforts of rich friends wake no echo in me, assuredly no envy. A home, as a settled place one owns and expects to live in for years, perhaps for ever, is abhorrent to every instinct in me, and when acquaintances show off with pride their cottage, their flat, their furniture, their "collections," even their "not a bad little garden, is it?" my heart confesses to a vague depression which makes it difficult

to sympathise and give them my blessing. Life, at its longest, is absurdly brief before health and energy begin to slip downhill; it is mapped with a cunning network of ruts and grooves from which, once in, it is difficult to escape; only the lucky ones are never caught, although the "caught" are lucky perhaps in another way—they do not realize it. Yet even to-day, when times are bad and the horizon not too clear for some time ahead, the old dread of starvation rises in me; I never see apple rings in a grocer's window without getting their taste and feeling them rise and swell within me like some troublesome emotion. . . . .

To my year and a-half on the *New York Times* I look back with nothing but pleasure; the slogan, "All the news that's fit to print," was practised; and the men I worked with were a good company of decent fellows. Muldoon, a fighting Irishman with a grim fierce manner and a warm heart, had a sense of humour and a gift for encouraging his reporters that made them love him. C. W. Miller was editor in chief, and Carey, manager. Who owned the paper I have forgotten, but it was not Colonel Jones who was present at the Union League Club dinner to my father, when I made my maiden speech some nine years before. Hours of work were from noon until the night assignment was turned in, which meant any time from ten o'clock onwards; though, as emergency man, in case of something happening late, I often had to stay in the office till after one in the morning. Proper food, a new suit, comradeship with a better class of men, came, perhaps, just in time for me. I remember the pleasure of writing home about my new post. I had a dress-suit again. I saved $15 a week.

Reporting for a New York newspaper can never be uneventful, but the painful incidents of life make deeper impressions than the pleasant ones. To meet the former means usually to call upon one's reserves, and memory hence retains sharper pictures of them corresponding to the greater effort. On the *Times* I was happy.

Two incidents stand out still in the mind, one creditable,

pleasing to vanity; the other, exactly the reverse. The latter, though it annoyed Muldoon keenly at the moment, fortunately for me appealed to his sense of humour too. He had given me an evening off—that is, all I had to do was to write a brief report of a Students' Concert in which his little niece was performing.

"Without straining veracity," he mentioned with a grin, "ye might perhaps say something kind and pretty about her!" He winked, whispering her name in my ear. "Have ye got it?" he asked fiercely. I nodded. Was I thinking of something else at the moment? Was my mind in the woods that lovely evening in spring?

At the concert I picked out the name I remembered and wrote later a sturdy eulogistic notice of an atrocious performer, saying the very prettiest and nicest things I could think of, then went home to a coveted early bed. But Muldoon's grim smile next day, as I reported at his desk for an assignment, gave me warning that something was wrong. He did not keep me in suspense. I had selected for my praise, not only the crudest performer of the concert—that I already knew—but one whom all the other pupils disliked intensely, and whose name they particularly hoped would be omitted altogether. The niece I had not even mentioned.

The other incident that stands out after all these years was more creditable. Dr. Lyman Abbott, Editor of the *Outlook*, which once Henry Ward Beecher edited as the *Church Union*, was preaching in Beecher's Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, a series of sermons on "The Theology of an Evolutionist," and Muldoon had persuaded the editor-in-chief that a full report on the front page every Monday would be a credit to the paper. His proposal was agreed to, apparently without too much enthusiasm. The Irishman was determined to justify it. "I want ye to take it on," said Muldoon to me. "Ye can write shorthand. Make it 150." A column was 100. To have a column and a-half on the front page, if I could do it well, would be a feather in my cap. But my shorthand was poor, I was out of practice too, bad notes are impossible to

read for transcription, and mistakes would mean angry letters of correction from Dr. Abbott, probably.

Monday was my day off. I went to Plymouth Church with a new notebook and three soft lead pencils, duly sharpened at both ends. In the brief interval before Sunday I practised hard. The church was packed to the roof, as I sneaked up the aisle—an unfamiliar place, I felt it!—to a little table placed immediately beneath the pulpit. I came in after the service, but just in time for the sermon. There were no other reporters present. It thrilled me to see Dr. Abbott, who, as a young man of twenty-three, had heard Lincoln speak on slavery.

The "Theology of an Evolutionist" was an arduous assignment that strained every faculty I possessed, but indifferent shorthand lay at the root of the strain. Dr. Abbott's delivery was sure and steady, more rapid than it sounded. He never hesitated for a word, he never coughed, or cleared his throat, or even sneezed. There were none of those slight pauses which help a poor shorthand-writer to pick up valuable seconds. The stream of words poured on relentlessly, and the rate, I should judge, was 250 a minute. Verbatim reporting was impossible to me. I had to condense as I went along, and to condense without losing sense and coherence was not easy. My pencil was always eight or ten words behind the words I actually listened to, and the Pitman outlines for the words I wrote down had to be recalled, while, at the same time, memory had to retain those being actually uttered at the moment. Being out of practice I often hesitated over an outline, losing fractions of a second each time I did so. These outlines come automatically, of course, to a good writer. Then there was the sense, the proportion, the relative values of argument and evidence to be considered—matters that could not be adjusted in the office afterwards, when there was barely time, in any case, to transcribe my notes before going to Press. The interest I felt in the subject, moreover, delayed my mind time and time again. Occasionally a pencil-point would break as well, and turning it round in my hand meant important delay in a process

where each fraction of a second counts. In the office afterwards, each page transcribed was whipped away by a printer's devil before it could be reconsidered and re-read. I invariably went to bed after these evenings in church with a splitting headache; but the 150 appeared duly on the front page every Monday morning, though whether good or bad I had no inkling. My impression, due to Muldoon's silence, was that my reports were hardly a success.

When the last of the long series came my opening report was confused and inaccurate owing to an announcement from the pulpit which embarrassed me absurdly. Dr. Abbott mentioned briefly that numerous requests to print the sermons had reached him, but that he did not propose to do so. He referred those interested, instead, to the reports in the *Times* which, he took pleasure in saying, were excellent, accurate and as satisfactory as anything he could do himself. Being the only reporter present, I felt conspicuous at my little table under the pulpit in the immense building. But I remember the pleasure too. It was an announcement I could use, was bound to use, indeed, in my own report next day. Muldoon would be pleased. On the Tuesday morning, when I appeared at his desk, he looked at me with such a fierce expression that I thought I was about to be dismissed. "Have ye been to your locker?" was all he said. In the locker, however, I found a letter from Dr. Abbott to the editor-in-chief, thanking him for the reports of the sermons, reports, he wrote, "whose brevity, accuracy, and intelligence furnish a synopsis I could not have improved upon myself." He added, too, another important sentence: "by your reporter whom I do not know." It was not favouritism therefore. A brief chit to be handed to the cashier was in my locker too. My salary was raised to $40 a week. The headaches had proved worth while.

The year and a-half with the *Times* was a happy period, though long before it ended I had begun to feel my customary weariness of the job, and a yearning for something new. The newspaper experience, which began with the

Evening Sun, was exhausted for me. The pleasant and unpleasant sides of it I knew by heart. Though I took no action, my mind began to cast about for other fields. I had saved a little cash. My thoughts turned westwards, California, the Pacific Coast, the bright sunshine and blue waters of the southern seas even. I was past twenty-seven. To be a New York reporter all my life did not appeal. Nor was it yet time to go back to England. No trace of literary faculty, nor any desire to write, much less a consciousness that I could write perhaps, had declared themselves. My summer holidays of two weeks I spent again in the backwoods, with a view to some woodland life which was to include, this time, Old Louis, too. Obstacles everywhere made me feel, however, that it was not to be, for though they were obstacles I could have overcome, I took them as an indication that fate had other views for my future. When a thing was meant to be, it invariably came of itself, I found. My temperament, at any rate, noted and obeyed these hints. Old Louis, too, who was to collect his poems in our woodland home, to write new ones as well, met all practical suggestions with, "Let us consider, Figlio, a little longer first." He was to write also a political history of the United States and "I must collect more data before I am ready to go." The dread of being fixed and settled, a captive in a place I could not leave at a moment's notice, did not operate where Nature was concerned. The idea of living in the forests had no fear of prison in it.

Events, moreover, which brought big changes into my life had always come, I noticed, from outside, rather than as a result of definite action on my own part. A chance meeting in a hotel-bar set me reporting, a chance meeting with Mullins landed me on the *Times*, a chance meeting with Angus Hamilton in Piccadilly Circus led to my writing books, a chance meeting with William E. Dodge now suddenly heaved me up another rung of life into the position of private secretary to a millionaire banker.

To me it has always seemed that some outside power,

but an intelligent power, pulled a string each time, and up I popped into an entirely new set of circumstances. This power pushed a button, and off I shot in a direction at right angles to the one I had been moving in before. This intelligent supervision I attributed in those days to Karma. In the mind, though perhaps with less decision there, it operated too. A book, a casual sentence of some friend, an effect of scenery, of music, and an express-lift mounts rapidly from the cellar of my being to an upper story, giving a new extended view over a far, a new horizon. Much that puzzles in the obscurity of the basement outlook becomes clear and simple. The individual who announces the sudden change is unaware probably how vital a rôle he plays in another's life. He is but an instrument, after all.

When, by chance, I found Mr. Dodge next me in a Broadway cable car, my first instinct was to slip out on to the outside platform before he had seen me, with, simultaneously, a hope that if he had seen me, he would not recognize me. He was a friend of my father's. We had dined at his house on our first visit to New York, and once or twice since then our paths had crossed for a moment or two. He was a man of great influence, and of tireless philanthropy, a fine, just, high-minded personality. He stared hard at me. Before I could move, he had spoken to me by name. "How was I getting along?" he inquired kindly, and did I "like New York?" What was I "doing at the moment?"

I seized the opportunity and told him of my longing to get out of newspaper work. He listened attentively; he examined me, I was aware, more than attentively. In the end he asked me to come and see him for a personal chat—not in his office, but in his house. He named a day and hour. An invitation to his office I should have disregarded. It was the kindness of "my house" that won me. But the interview was disappointing, rather embarrassing as well to me. He asked many personal questions about my life and habits, it was all very business-like and chilling. In the end he mentioned vaguely that

James Speyer, of Speyer Bros., was thinking, he believed, of engaging a secretary, and that possibly—he could not say for certain—he might, when he next saw him, suggest my name for the post. "Of course," he added, still more cautiously, "you will understand I must make inquiries about you at the *Times*." He promised to let me know if anything further came of it. For many weeks I heard no word. Then I wrote. The reply asked me to call at his office. He was kindness and sympathy personified. "The *Times* gives you an excellent character," he informed me, "and say they will be very sorry to lose you. I am sorry there has been this delay." He handed me a personal letter to James Speyer. He invited me to dinner in his house the following evening. Before brushing up my dress-suit for the occasion—my first dinner in a decent house for many years—I had seen Mr. Speyer and had been engaged at a salary of $2,000 a year for a morning job, from 8 till 2 o'clock daily, with a general supervision during the day of his town and country houses, horses, servants, charities, and numerous other interests.

The dinner in Mr. Dodge's Fifth Avenue palace was a veritable banquet to me. Immediately opposite, across the avenue, was the other palace occupied by James Speyer. It was all rather bewildering, a new world with a vengeance. Years among the outcast of the city had not precisely polished my manners, nor could I feel at my ease thus suddenly among decent folk again. I remember being absurdly tongue-tied, shy and awkward, until M. de Chaillu, who was present, began to talk about books, stars, natural history, and other splendid things, and took me with him into some unimaginable seventh heaven. I had moments of terror too, but the strongest emotion I remember is the deep gratitude I felt towards Mr. Dodge. A further tiny detail clings as well, when I was invited for a week-end to the Dodge country house on the Hudson, and was bathing with the son. He was, like myself, six feet three inches, well built, but well covered too, his age perhaps close on forty. As we stood on the spring-board waiting for our second dive, he looked

at me. "You certainly haven't got a tummy," he remarked with admiring envy. "I wish I were as thin!" And the casual words made a queer impression on me. I realized abruptly how little of certain real values such people knew . . . how little these protected people ever *could* know. I still see his admiring, good-humoured, kindly expression, as he said the empty words. . . .

James Speyer, brother of Edgar, who later became a baronet and member of the Privy Council, was what we called in New York a "white man." I hardly think I proved an ideal private secretary. His patience and kindness began at the first trial interview I had with him, when my shorthand—he dictated a newspaper financial paragraph full of unfamiliar terms—was not at its best, "not *very* grand," were the actual words he used. As for bookkeeping, I told him frankly that "figures were my idea of hell," whereupon, after a moment's puzzled stare, he laughed and said that keeping accounts need not be among my principal duties. A clerk from the office could come up and balance the books every month. The phrase about hell, the grave expression of my face, he told me long afterwards, touched his sense of humour. The huge book in which I kept his personal accounts proved, none the less, a daily nightmare, with its nine columns for different kinds of expenditure—Charities, Housekeeping, Presents, Loans, Personal, and the rest. It locked with a key. I spent hours over it. No total ever came out twice alike. Yet Mr. Hopf, the bright-eyed, diminutive German from the office, ran his tiny fingers up and down those columns like some twinkling insect, chatting with me while he added, and making the totals right in a few minutes. Max Hopf, with his slight, twisty body, looked like an agile figure of 3 himself. In his spare time, I felt sure, he played with figures. He was a juggler in my eyes.

The first week in my new job was a nervous one, though Mr. Speyer's tact and kindly feeling soon put me at my ease. My desk at first was in a corner of an unused board room in the bank, where I sat like a king answering

countless letters on a typewriter. The shorthand was discarded; I composed the replies from verbal hints and general indications. Clerks treated me with respect; language was decent; surroundings were sumptuous; it was some time before I "found" myself. The second morning a caller was shown in, somebody to see Mr. Speyer. He took a chair beside my desk, stared fixedly at me, opened his mouth and called me by my Christian name—it was the Exchange Place banker who used to stay in my father's house and who had last seen me in bed at East 19th Street. He congratulated me. I found out, incidentally, then, how much my swindling friend of those days had "touched" him for on my behalf . . . and repaid it.

James Speyer proved a good friend during the two years or so I spent with him; he treated me as friend, too, rather than as secretary. My office was transferred to his palatial residence in Madison Avenue, a new house he had just built for himself, and it was part of my job to run this house for him, his country house at Irvington on the Hudson as well. These establishments, for a millionaire bachelor, were on a simple scale, though the amount of money necessary for one man's comforts staggered me at first. A married French couple were his chief servants, the woman as cook, the man as butler; they had been with him for a long time; they eyed the new secretary with disfavour; they were feathering their nests very comfortably, I soon discovered. My hotel experience in Toronto stood me in good stead here. But Mr. Speyer was a generous, live-and-let-live type of man who did not want a spirit of haggling over trifles in his home. I gradually adjusted matters by introducing a reasonable scale. The French couple and I became good friends. I enjoyed the work, which included every imaginable duty under the sun, had ample time for exercise and reading, and my employer's zest in the University Settlement Movement I found particularly interesting.

James Speyer was more than a rich philanthropist: he had a heart. The column for Charities and Presents in

the book Mr. Hopf juggled with once a month was a big one, while that for Personal Expenditure was relatively small. When I dined alone with him in the luxurious panelled room I realized that life had indeed changed for me. His house, too, was filled with beautiful things. He had rare taste. His brother Edgar, whose English career had not yet begun, stayed with him on his periodical visits from Frankfurt. There was music then, big dinner-parties too, to which I was sometimes invited. Social amenities were not always quite easy, for the position of a Jew in New York Society was delicate, but I never once knew James Speyer's taste or judgment at fault. His intelligence showed itself not only in finance; he was intelligent all over; imaginatively thoughtful for all connected with him, and his philanthropy sprang from a genuine desire to help the unfortunate.

For Jews I have always had a quick feeling of sympathy, of admiration. I adore their intelligence, subtlety, keen love of beauty, their understanding, their wisdom. In the best of them lies some intuitive grip of ancient values, some artistic discernment, that fascinates me. I found myself comparing Alfred Louis with James Speyer; their reaction, respectively, upon myself showed clearly again the standard of what, to me, was important: the one, alone among his unchangeable, imperishable "Eternities," unaware of comfort as of fame, unrecognized, unadvertised, lonely and derelict, yet equally as proud of his heritage as the other who, in a noisier market sought the less permanent splendours of success and worldly honour. One filled his modern palace with olden beauty fashioned by many men, the other had stocked his mind with a loveliness that money could not buy. One financed a gigantic railway enterprise, the other wrote the "Night Song." All the one said blessed and ornamented the mind, all the other said advised it. One parted with a poem as though he sold a pound of his own living flesh, the other was pleased, yet a trifle nervous, when Muldoon—thinking to help me in my job—wrote a panegyric of easy philanthropies in the *Brooklyn Eagle*, to which his fierce activities had now been

transferred from the *Times*. Both taught me much. From one, singing amid his dirt in an attic, I learned about a world that, hiding behind ephemeral appearances, lies deathlessly serene and unalterably lovely ; from the other, about a world which far from deathless and certainly less serene, flaunts its rewards upon a more obviously remunerative scale. Of both poet and financier, at any rate, I kept vivid, grateful, pleasant memories.

Between the unsavoury world I had lived in so long and the new one I had now entered, the Old Man of Visions, himself at home in all and every kind of world, always seemed a bridge. His personality spread imaginatively, as it were, over all grades and through all strata of humanity. In my slow upward climb he seemed to hand me on, and in return for his unfailing guidance it was possible to make his own conditions a trifle more comfortable : possible, but not easy, because there was no help he needed and did not positively scorn. He watched my welfare with unfailing interest, but nothing would induce him to buy a new hat, a new frock-coat, an umbrella or a pair of gloves. " Our memories, at any given moment," says Bergson, " form a solid whole, a pyramid, so to speak, whose point is inserted precisely into our present action." On that " point " old Louis still drives through my mind and wields an influence to-day. . . .

The happier period with James Speyer was, of course, an episode, like my other experiences. It was wonderful to draw a good salary regularly for pleasant work ; to have long holidays in the Adirondacks, or moose-shooting in the woods north of the Canadian Pacific Railway ; wonderful, too, when my employer went to Europe for three months, to know myself in charge of such big interests, with a power of attorney to sign all cheques. But the usual restlessness was soon on me again, desire for a change stirred in my blood. The Spanish-American War, I remember, made me think of joining Roosevelt's Rough Riders, a scheme both Speyer and Louis strongly disapproved, and that an attack of typhoid fever rendered impossible in any case.

It was during convalescence that it occurred to me I was nearing thirty, and that if I meant to live in America all my life, it was time to become naturalized. And this thought caused me to reflect on the question of going home. My sister, with her children, passed through New York about this time, returning from South Australia, where her husband was Governor, and it was at dinner in my employer's house, where he had invited them, that the longing to return to England suddenly declared itself. To find myself among relatives who called me by the unfamiliar childhood name, woke English memories, English values, and brought back the English atmosphere once more. My mother was still alive. . . . I remember that dinner well. My sister brought a tame little Mexican monkey with her. A man, also, called to ask Mr. Speyer for help, and when I went to interview him in the hall, his long story included a reference to something Mr. Dodge, he declared, had done for him. "Mr. Dodge gave me this," he said, and promptly scooped one eye out of its socket and showed it to me lying in the palm of his hand. The glass eye, the monkey, remain associated in my mind still with the rather poignant memories of forgotten English days my sister's visit stirred to life, and with my own emotions as I reflected upon the idea of going home at last. A chance meeting, again, worked its spell.

I had felt that half a universe separated me from the world in which my relatives lived, but after they had gone I began to realize various things I had not appreciated before. New York, I saw, could furnish no true abiding city for my soul which, though vagabond, yet sought something more than its appalling efficiency could ever give. What did I miss? I could name it now, but I hardly named it then perhaps. I was always hungry there, but with a hunger not of the body merely. The hunger, however, was real, often it was devastating. With such a lop-sided development as mine had been, my immaturity, no doubt, was still glaring. The sense of failure, I know, at any rate, was very strong. My relatives

had been travelling, and they reflected a colour of other lands that called to me. Thought and longing now turned to an older world. There were ancient wonders, soft with age, mature with a beauty and tenderness only timelessness can give, that caught me on the raw with a power no Yosemites, Niagaras, or Grand Canyons could hope to imitate. Size has its magic, but size bludgeons the imagination, rather than feeds it. My heart turned suddenly across the sea. I loved the big woods, but behind, beyond the woods, great Egypt lay ablaze. . . .

I talked things over with the Old Man of Visions; he advised me to go home. "See your mother before she dies," he urged. "I cannot come with you, but I may follow you." He added: "I shall miss you," then dropped into poetry, as he always did when he was moved. . . .

It was these talks with Old Louis about England, the atmosphere of England as well, that my sister somehow left behind her, my own yearnings now suddenly re-awakened too, that decided me. My detestation of the city both cleared and deepened. I began to understand more vividly, more objectively, the reasons for my feeling alien in it. I missed tradition, background, depth. There was a glittering smartness everywhere. The great ideal was to be sharper, smarter than your neighbour, above all things sharp and smart and furiously rapid, above all things—win the game. To be in a furious rush was to be intelligent, to do things slowly was to be derided. The noise and speed suggested rapids; the deep, quiet pools were in the older lands. Display, advertisement, absence of all privacy I had long been aware of, naturally; I now realized how little I desired this speed and glittering brilliance, this frantic rush to be at all costs sharper, quicker, smarter than one's neighbour, to win the game at any price. I realized why my years in the city had brought no friendships, and why they had been starved as well as lonely. . . .

Some months passed before I booked a passage, however. I was sorry to leave James Speyer. Then one day he spoke to me about—marriage. For a year or more

I had noticed his friendship with Mrs. Lowry, a Christian, well-known figure in the social world; and, being the confidant of both parties, I had done all I could to encourage a marriage that promised happiness and success. In due course, Bishop Potter, of New York, officiated. The ceremony was performed in the drawing-room, and just before it began, James Speyer came up to me, took the beautiful links out of his cuffs, and handed them to me. "I should like you to have these," he said, "as a little memento." I have them still.

A few months later, just before I was thirty, I found myself in a second-class cabin in a Cunarder, with my savings in my pocket. Old Louis, who followed me a year or two later, came down to see me off. I was glad when the Statue of Liberty lay finally below the sea's horizon, but I shall never forget the thrill of strange emotion I experienced when I first saw the blue rim of Ireland rise above the horizon a few days later. A shutter dropped behind me. I entered a totally new world. Life continued to be *mouvementée*, indeed, one adventure succeeding another, and ever with the feeling that a chance letter, a chance meeting might open any morning a new chapter of quite a novel kind; but my American episodes were finished.

Of mystical, psychic, or so-called "occult" experiences, I have purposely said nothing, since these notes have sought to recapture surface adventures only.

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